

Setting Up Your Home Family History Center

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Course Description: When one considers the plethora of electronic equipment and software available to assist in conducting family history, one can easily become overwhelmed. Learn the type of equipment and software genealogists are using to accomplish their research. Understand the questions to ask and how to evaluate options in choosing resources.

Introduction: Using the right tool and resources

When I was about 12 years old, I remember my grandfather asking me to help prepare a portion of ground for a garden in his backyard. To surprise my grandfather, I rose early and went out with a shovel and began to turn the soil. After a couple hours of work, I had hardly made a dent in the task. About that time my grandfather rolled out from his shed a gas-powered tiller. With the pull of a cord, the engine started and the tiller began to rotate. In less than 30 minutes the first phase of preparing the garden space for planting was completed. I then used the shovel to work the spaces the tiller was not able to reach. We used the hoe to dig furrows and plant the seeds. By noon the garden was in place receiving its first water of the season. I learned an important lesson that day. When you use the right tools and resources, work speeds up and you are able to more effectively use your time.

Over the last few years I have been doing genealogical research, identifying and preserving family records, writing family histories and so forth. The progression of tools to assist in the work continues to grow at an ever increasing rate. I have tried to apply the very simply lesson I learned as a boy of effectively using time and resources to accomplish genealogical research goals.

How to choose the right tools and resources

I don't think there is a manual, or at least not that I've seen, that spells out which tools and resources to use in all cases of genealogical research. There are, however, a plethora of tools and resources, with different price ranges and quality that we have at our disposal to choose from for help.

Before I use or acquire any tool or resource, I seek to understand the goal and tasks associated with its accomplishment and then find the resources I will need. I started with one project and over time I have surrounded myself with various tools that I use often in the pursuit of research and service to others.

Starting a Project: Set the Goal and Objectives

The process of setting research goals helps you choose where you want to go. By knowing precisely what you want to achieve, you know where you have to concentrate

your efforts. This is critical in helping you stay focused and not being diverted into multiple directions having many unfinished genealogy projects which become overwhelming.

Goals are set on a number of different levels: First you decide what you want to do. Second, break the goal down into smaller pieces which become your plan.

The following are broad guidelines used in setting genealogy goals or any goal for that matter:

1. **State each goal as a positive statement:** Express your goals positively.
2. **Be precise:** Set a precise goal, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement.
3. **Set priorities:** When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by having too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.
4. **Write goals down:** This crystallizes them and gives them more value.
5. **Keep operational goals small:** Keep the low-level goals you are working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Derive today's goals from larger ones.
6. **Set performance goals, not outcome goals:** You should try to set goals for which you have as much control as possible. There is nothing more dispiriting than failing to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control. These could be bad business environments, poor judgments, bad weather, injury, or just plain bad luck. If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from them.
7. **Set realistic goals:** It is important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people (parents, media, and society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions. Alternatively, you may be naïve in setting very high goals. You might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.
8. **Do not set goals too low:** Just as it is important not to set goals unrealistically high, do not set them too low. People tend to do this when they are afraid of failure or where they are lazy! You should set goals so that they are slightly out of your immediate grasp, but not so far that there is no hope of achieving them. No one will put serious effort into achieving a goal that they believe is unrealistic. However, remember that your belief that a goal is unrealistic may be incorrect. If this could be the case, you can change this belief by using imagery effectively.

The key to developing your home family history center is done one project at a time. Always be asking, is there a better way to achieve my goal? If so, how? Talk to other genealogists, read, take classes, review resources, etc. so that you become as knowledgeable about your project as possible.

A story is told of the pioneers when they started across the plains they wanted to keep track of how far they traveled. The first idea was tying a red scarf around the wheel and counting how many times it went around. As pioneers worked on the problem, they came up with designing an odometer for the wagon, eliminating the need to count turns of the wheel.

I am always learning throughout any project. Recently I learned how to use a feature in my scanning and photo editing software that saved 25% of the total time in scanning projects.

An example of one of my genealogy goals is as follows:

Project: Develop a CD/DVD for the Elias Jones 150th Family Reunion

Project Detail: Identify and secure the available digital photos, documents, personal histories etc. of each of the six family lines that cover the period of 1850 through 1930. (3 generations of each family line).

Goal: By July 28, 2006, complete a CD/DVD containing digital photos, documents, and personal histories for each of the children of Elias Jones (b. 3 Oct 1809, Cadoxton-juxta-n, Glamorganshire, Wales) for the Elias Jones 150th Family Reunion.

Objectives:

1. By March 10 gain approval from Elias Jones Reunion Chair and committee by March 10.
2. By March 15 identify key contacts and information for each family lines of Elias Jones.
 - a. Mary Jones Flavel
 - b. John Jones
 - c. Llewellyn Jones
 - d. Annie Jones Banks
 - e. Ruth Jones Bowen
 - f. Mary Hopkins Beck
3. By March 25 send a letter to each family contact outlining the project and desires.
4. By April 1 phone each contact to review the project and identify who has desired artifacts.
5. By April 15 talk with each person having information for each line and set time to secure and scan information.

6. Expand research as new resources are identified.
7. By July 5 scan available photos, documents, histories etc.
8. By July 5 search the Utah State, Utah County, and Spanish Fork Daughters of the Utah Pioneers museums for family histories and related artifacts.
9. By July 5 take photos of key Jones historic sites in Utah County.
10. By July 5 search BYU George Andersen Photo Collection for any family photos that may exist.
11. By July 15 crop, label, and log artifacts.
12. By July 20 review each family line files and how they will be presented on CD/DVD.
13. By July 20 design cover of CD/DVD.
14. By July 24 write and design draft order form for CD/DVD.
15. By July 25 review files with Elias Jones reunion chair to review content and order of the files on CD/DVD and order form.
16. By July 28 show 10 minute power point presentation of CD/DVD. Pass out order forms.
17. By August 7 send letter out to family lines announcing the CD/DVD.
18. By August 20 fill all orders for CD/DVD.

What information will I need? (example)

1. Who is the contact for each Elias Jones family line, address, and phone number?
2. I desire to have photos, family histories, newspaper articles, Gedcoms, etc.
3. What are the times the DUP is open in SLC, Provo, and Spanish Fork?
4. Do I need special permission to reuse any of the material that is acquired?
5. Who else has done a project like this with whom I can discuss and learn from?
6. What articles have been written about such projects?

What equipment/software will I need? (Example)

1. PC
2. Laptop
3. Scanner
4. Photoshop
5. Epson Printer

Do I need any new resources? (Example)

1. 2.1 USB adaptor to speed downloads of files from scanner to laptop.
2. Blank media for CD's and DVD's.

What issues do I still need to resolve? (Example)

1. Who will help to identify photos of unknown persons?
2. Who can I ask to help scan personal files?
3. What is the cost to request for CD/DVD? (Break-even price)

4. Is there a better way to complete the project that will save me time, money and resources?

Choosing the Software for your Home Family History Center

Genealogy can be done using paper forms, word processing, and software. Hands down, genealogy software makes data entry and organization very easy. You have a choice of charts and formats. You are able to share information with others through printing or exchanging a GEDCOM file in minutes. There are many genealogy programs to choose from.

So which one do you use? I personally use PAF 5.2. It works well for my needs. Amongst my genealogy associates, I can think of 10 different programs that are used. We are able to exchange GEDCOMS and our data is still in place. Which software to use is based on preferences in feature and function. It's worth taking the time to review your options and talk to other genealogists before making your final choice.

The following are some criteria you may use to evaluate software.

1. What do you want to do with your genealogy information? Some genealogists want to create beautiful wall-sized trees, some want to include photos, audio and video, some want to use the software to create a family web page for them and some are just looking for a basic program that can store names, dates and events.
2. Would you prefer a software program which is lineage-based (linking individuals by direct bloodlines) or event-based (linking individuals through common life events)?
3. Do you plan to share your research online with other family historians? The major genealogy programs offer the ability to upload your family tree data online in a variety of formats right from your computer program. Some also offer simple web-page creation capabilities.
4. Will you want to write a book with the information that you enter? Some software programs offer more features for printing family history books than others.
5. Do you prefer to use keystrokes to enter data, or do you prefer to click from box to box with the mouse?
6. What kind of charts and reports would you like your software to be able to print?
7. Do you want to easily read genealogy files created in other software programs without any loss of data?
8. Are you tracing your family's history for eventual submission to the LDS church? If so, you will want to use software that supports the special fields needed to document rites of the church.

9. How willing are you to take time to learn all the features of the program? If you are easily frustrated and hate to read instruction manuals, you may want to forgo the fancy software program with all of the whiz-bang features for a somewhat simpler program which you can become comfortable with quickly.

What are the most Popular Genealogy Software Programs?

The following are genealogy software packages that would be considered the most discussed and used genealogy software packages. Reviews of the software are provided where possible. Under the column of software, is identified as **Tier 1**, **Tier 2**, and **Tier 3** based on a combination reviews, personal discussion with vendors, discussions with genealogists and surveys of user preference. The Tier rating has the following meaning:

1. **Tier 1 Software is well respected and used by genealogists of all levels.**
2. **Tier 2 Software is good, lacks some feature functionality of Tier 1.**
3. **Tier 3 Software that performs genealogy functions, used by special user groups, or lacks important functionality.**

Genealogy Software			
Software and Publisher, URL, and Rating		Genealogy Software Round-up by Kimberly Powell March 2006	Louis Kessler's Genealogy Software Links
1	Ancestral Quest by Incline Software Source: http://www.ancquest.com Tier 2 Software	If you're a PAF user looking for extra features or someone who wants to be able to easily collaborate with other researchers online, then Ancestral Quest may be the software for you. For everyone else, however, there are other family tree programs that do it slightly better or cost a little less.	A Windows program designed specifically for PAF users who want a much easier-to-use Windows interface for their PAF developed-data.
2	Brother's Keeper by John Steed Source: http://www.bkwin.org/ Tier 2 Software		The most respected and successful shareware genealogical program. Has been around a long time and has many dedicated users. Both Windows and DOS versions available.
3	Family Tree Legends by Pearl Street Software Source: http://www.familytreelegends.com Tier 2 Software	(4 stars) - Family Tree Legends offers most of the features you would expect in a well-rounded genealogy software program, but where it really shines is in its tight Internet integration, making it easy to backup your database, look for and download matches from other family trees, and publish your family tree online with just a few clicks.	A very capable and easy-to-use program with very nice looking forms. It is tightly integrated with the online GenCircles genealogy program.
4	Family Tree Maker by MyFamily.com Source: http://www.familytreemaker.com/ Tier 2 Software	Overall, Family Tree Maker is a good choice for amateur genealogists and arguably the best choice for genealogists looking to easily share their family information in print. However, it lacks some of the customizable sourcing and project management tools required by many serious researchers, doesn't output to HTML, and will not allow you to export multimedia links into GEDCOM files.	A quality product available on more store shelves than any other program. Produces a wide variety of reports and charts. Every version of this program has been getting better, and it now has most of the features you would expect in a top program.

5	<p>GEDitCOM by John Nairn Source: http://www.geditcom.com/</p> <p>Tier 3 Software</p>		A customizable genealogy application for the Macintosh for editing and viewing GEDCOM files.
6	<p>Genbox Family History by Thoughtful Creations Source: http://www.genbox.com/</p> <p>Tier 3 Software</p>		A complete genealogy software package. It will help you organize your research, store your data, enter proper source citations, and produce professional-quality charts and reports that you can preview and modify, then print or publish on the web.
7	<p>GenoPro by Daniel Morin Source: http://www.genopro.com/</p> <p>Tier 2 Software</p>	(4 stars) - Extensive data entry fields and customizable sources mean that Genbox will meet the needs of almost any genealogist. Helpful project management tools and a wealth of beautiful reports and charts round out this surprisingly complete package.	The only program that displays genograms. Many unique features including the ability to write macros in VBScript and JavaScript to perform complex computations and transformations on your family tree. It used to be freeware but is now shareware. Has had millions of downloads from shareware sites.
8	<p>Legacy by Millennia Corp Source: http://www.legacyfamilytree.com/</p> <p>Tier 1 Software</p>	(4 1/2 stars) - An intuitive interface, powerful collaboration features, and multiple views make Legacy Family Tree one of the best genealogy software programs on the market, not even considering the fact that it's free. The best features are only available in the \$29.95 Deluxe Version, however, and fancy charts require an extra add-on program.	A comprehensive Windows shareware program with many features, nicely described on their web site. It has a standard version that is free, and is one of the best free genealogy programs available.
9	<p>Lifelines by Marc Nozell Source: http://lifelines.sourceforge.net/</p> <p>Tier 3 Software</p>		Made for the Unix environment, this may be the most powerful program available, with a programming language that allows custom reports and complete extensibility. It is free, and has become Open Source - meaning that programmers all over the world are working together to enhance it. The original author was Tom Wetmore.
10	<p>Personal Ancestral File (PAF) by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Source: http://www.familysearch.org/eng/paf/</p> <p>Tier 2 Software</p>	One of the oldest and most popular genealogy software programs available, this family tree software from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is available for free download. Powerful and full-featured, it is also very user-friendly, making it perfect for novice computer users and genealogists. Not updated very frequently, however.	PAF is a very popular genealogy program that has been available for many years. It has been updated and has many fine features. PAF is now free. It is also available for the Macintosh
11	<p>Reunion by Leister Productions, Inc. Source: http://www.leisterpro.com/</p> <p>Tier 1 Software</p>	Another excellent option for Mac users mentioned highly by many reviewers is Heredis Mac X.2.	Reunion is one of the easiest-to-use programs with superb charting capabilities and many features. Only available for the Macintosh.
12	<p>RootsMagic by RootsMagic, Inc. Source: http://www.rootsmagic.com</p> <p>Tier 1 Software</p>	RootsMagic 3.0 (4 1/2 stars) - If you're looking for genealogy software that's easy enough to use without the manual, yet full-featured enough to satisfy a professional genealogist, then you should definitely check out RootsMagic. From beautiful charts and flexible book publishing, to easy data entry and advanced sourcing, RootsMagic offers something for everyone.	A program from the developer of the very popular and well-liked Family Origins. This program is even better. Complete and easy to use with extensive reports.

13	<p>The Master Genealogist by Wholly Genes, Inc. Source: http://www.whollygenes.com/</p> <p>Tier 1 Software</p>	<p>(4 1/2 stars) - A choice of many genealogy professionals, The Master Genealogist (TMG) stands out for its ability to record every last detail of your family tree and its features for fully documenting and evaluating genealogical evidence. It has a bit of a steep learning curve, but if you live for details, like to customize, and don't mind spending a little more, you'll love TMG.</p>	<p>A comprehensive program with many features that include a powerful report writer and excellent source referencing.</p>
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Resources for Evaluating Genealogy Software

The following are web resources that will assist in your evaluation of genealogy software. Two of the pages of particular help to me were:

Louis Kessler's Genealogy Software Links. I like this resource the best. This is a complete list of genealogy software and genealogy program websites. Included is my brief subjective opinion about each of them.

Comparing Genealogy Software Programs. There are four feature comparison charts. These should give you ideas of the features available in each of the programs, although understand, these tables compare only a few of the features available in each of these programs.

- a. General Features Comparison - Chart 1
- b. Multimedia/Reports Feature Comparison - Chart 2
- c. Notes/Sources Feature Comparison - Chart 3
- d. LDS Support Feature Comparison - Chart 4

Resources for Evaluating Genealogy Software		
	Source	Description and URL
1	Comparing Genealogy Software Programs by Richard Wilson	Compares many different features for 8 of the most popular programs. Source: http://rwilson.us/comparison.htm
2	Genealogical Software Report Card by Bill Mumford	A comparison of numerous features of some popular programs to try to fairly evaluate one against another. Source: http://www.mumford.ca/reportcard/
3	Genealogy Software Review by TopTenReviews	Detailed comparisons and reviews of many top programs, as well as a lot of information to help decide which program is best for you. Source: http://genealogy-software-review.toptenreviews.com/
4	Genealogy Software Reviews by ConsumerSearch	These are reviews about other published reviews of genealogy software in various magazines and periodicals. They compare and rate each review and the selections with each other. Source: http://www.consumersearch.com/www/software/genealogy-software/
5	Louis Kessler's Genealogy Software Links	One of my favorites. A complete list of genealogy software and genealogy program websites. Source: http://www.lkessler.com/gplinks.shtml
6	What Genealogy Software Should I Buy by Betty Clay	A very good article of things to consider before buying from Genealogical Computing, Oct 1, 1999. Source: http://www.ancestry.com/learn/library/article.aspx?article=1661

Periodicals All About Genealogical Programs		
	Source	Description and URL
1	Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter by Dick Eastman	Dick Eastman's excellent free online weekly newsletter that contains all the latest news of interest for genealogists using computers, and often has detailed reviews of genealogical software.

		Source: http://www.eogn.com
2	MobileGenealogy.com by Chad Osten	News about genealogy software for Handhelds, PDAs, and Mobile Phones. It covers Palm OS, PocketPC/Windows Mobile and Psion operating systems. This is a sister site of MacGenealogy.org. Source: http://mobilegenealogy.com/
3	Genealogical Computing by MyFamily.com, Inc.	A quarterly publication full of news, reviews, and how-to's about computer programs for genealogy. I have been a subscriber for several years. Has about 4500 subscribers. Source: http://www.ancestry.com/learn/publications/gencomp.htm

A Few Helpful Links for PAF Users

As stated earlier, I do use PAF, more by default. It is the first software I was introduced to and I have used it for the past several years. The following are a few extra links and software that may be useful.

Barry's Genealogy Software, Tutorial Resource, and Add-ons (as of August 1, 2006)		
	Software	Description and URL
1	Personal Ancestral File (PAF) by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	One of the oldest and most popular genealogy software programs available, this family tree software from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is available for free download. Powerful and full-featured, it is also very user-friendly, making it perfect for novice computer users and genealogists. Not updated very frequently, however. Source: http://www.familysearch.org/eng/paf/
2	Online Distribution Centre	Download PAF (and other family history stuff) for free from here. To get to the PAF download, click on "Software Downloads - Free" in the "Family History" section of the page. Source: http://www.ldscatalog.com/
3	PAF Tutorial	A comprehensive online PAF tutorial, complete with Demos. Source: http://paf tutorial.byu.edu/
4	Personal Ancestral File Lessons	An excellent set of online lessons on how to use PAF. Source: http://www.familysearch.org/eng/paf/lessons/paf5.html
5	Personal Ancestral File Companion by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	A utility program for Personal Ancestral File. It is designed to print a variety of high-quality genealogy charts and reports from Personal Ancestral File files. Source: http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Home/FAQ/frameset_faq.asp?FAQ=faq_paf_comp.asp
6	PAF Insight for Windows By Ohana Software LLC	Provides database synchronization, advanced merge, and multiple pedigree view and cleanup functions for PAF datasets. Source: http://www.ohanasoftware.com/
7	PAF Pal by Pal Software (Steve Cannon)	Adds additional features that are not available in the PAF software. Source: http://www.cannonfam.org/pafpal/
8	PAFWiz by Incline Software	Reporting, Web Generation and other Utilities to enhance PAF 5. Incline Software are the developers of Ancestral Quest. Source: http://www.pafwiz.com/

Choosing Additional Genealogy Software

In addition to genealogy software choices there are other programs very helpful to assist with many tasks. The following resources will help you identify those programs and assist in your evaluation.

Resources for Identifying Genealogical Programs on the Web		
	Source	Description and URL
1	About.com's Genealogy Software Pages	A fairly good list of categorized links and short descriptions of each program is available. Source: http://genealogy.about.com/od/family_tree_software/
2	Cyndi's List of Genealogy Sites - Software & Computers by Cyndi Howells	If you want completeness, Cyndi has the most comprehensive list of links available anywhere. If you want more than this, Cyndi has a section on this page titled "Miscellaneous Download and Reference Sites" that will take you everywhere else (including back to my page). Source: http://www.cyndislist.com/software.htm
3	Genealogy Shareware and Freeware by Car Park (Willem Rabbelier)	One of my favorite listings, organized alphabetically for each type of platform and itemizing the major features of each. This page lists Windows/DOS and Macintosh programs. Source: http://www.rabbel.info/software.html

4	Genealogy Shareware and Freeware (page 2)	This page lists Linux, Unix and Risc, Palm and Online programs. Source: http://www.rabel.info/software2.html
5	Louis Kessler's Genealogy Software Links	Another favorite. A complete list of genealogy software and genealogy program websites. Source: http://www.lkessler.com/gplinks.shtml

Online Resources

There are books, web pages, conferences, classes and opinions galore providing direction and details on every topic possible to help in your pursuit. The following are a few online resources that are starting points for researching many topics you will encounter as a genealogist:

Ancestors.com:	http://www.ancestry.com/learn/start/main.htm
Ancestors:	http://www.byubroadcasting.org/ancestors/
Cyndislist:	http://www.cyndislist.com/howto.htm
Genealogy.about.com:	http://genealogy.about.com/cs/beginnerscorner/ht/family_tree.htm
FamilySearch.org:	http://www.familysearch.org/
RootsWeb Review:	http://rwguide.rootsweb.com/
RootsWeb.com:	http://www.rootsweb.com/

What Other Software Is Helpful for Genealogy?

Earlier in the presentation, I discussed the idea that hardware, software and furnishings are added one project at a time (as the need presents itself) and over time have surrounded myself with various tools that are often used in research and service to others. It is really hard to add software you're not going to use immediately and then find out six months down the road that you need to upgrade. Software is a personal choice. I have been asked what I use in addition to PAF. The following is a list of that software and how I use it.

It is very important you understand this is simply a list of the software I use in genealogy research based on the projects and needs I have had. At the time of my analysis, they were what I considered to be the best solution based on price, functionality, and other related criteria.

Barry's Software Used to Help in Genealogy Research (as of August 1, 2006)		
Software	Barry's Notes, Price, and URL	Descriptions
1 Ad Aware by Lavasoft	Price: Free Software: Detecting and removing Spyware Barry's Use: Ad-Aware does a good job of detecting and removing spyware, and provides useful information about the threats it finds. Would recommend as a backup to your main antispyware utility, though. See: Google Pack Source: http://www.lavasoft.de/software/adaware/	Ad-Aware Personal provides advanced protection from known data-mining, aggressive advertising, Trojans, dialers, malware, browser hijackers, and tracking components. This software is downloadable free of charge.
2 Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Standard		Product Description Adobe Acrobat 7.0 is the quick and easy

	by Adobe	<p>Amazon Price: \$250-@290</p> <p>Software: I use the software to transform documents into PDF's. I can string scanned pages or photos of a scanned journal into 1 document. Software dramatically reduces size of documents for sharing.</p> <p>See also: PDF Convert Professional</p> <p>Source: http://www.adobe.com/</p>	<p>way to create and reliably share Adobe PDF documents. Transform your paperwork into Intelligent Documents for more secure and reliable files that accurately represent the original file or hard copy. Take advantage of the robust tools for sharing information and commenting on electronic files. Assemble documents, control their organization and search through them with more power than ever. Set document permissions and restrict which PDF documents can be printed or changed. Sign electronic documents using Digital signatures.</p>
3	<p>Adobe Acrobat Reader (Latest Version) By Adobe</p>	<p>Price: Free</p> <p>Software: When I didn't have Adobe Acrobat, I used software to open and read PDF files.</p> <p>See: Google Pack</p> <p>Source: http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readst/ep2.html</p>	<p>View, print, and search PDF files Launches up to 50% faster than Reader 6.0</p>
4	<p>Adobe Photoshop 7.0 by Adobe</p>	<p>Used/New Amazon Price for 7.0: \$75 to \$375</p> <p>New Amazon Price for CS: \$500-\$575</p> <p>Software: I use the software for editing photos and scans. I also use the software as the shell from which I scan. When I scan software inside the Photoshop 7.0 or Elements software I am able to scan 50 -100 items at a time. I am able to automate routine functions. Per 100 times scanned, I am saving 1.0 to 1.5 hours. Buying the software a generation behind simplifies the ability to get into a more expensive software without the loss of key features that I want.</p> <p>Sources for (Latest Version): Adobe Photoshop 7.0</p>	<p>Amazon.com Review</p> <p>With each new version of Photoshop, Adobe never fails to come up with an awe-inspiring mix of great new features, productivity enhancements, and tweaks and treats. Version 7 is no exception. Major points of interest include a new healing brush that removes facial wrinkles and other surface blemishes with incredible ease, a long-awaited file browser that allows you to view image thumbnails and metadata, enhanced Web features, automatic color correction, and even a spell checker.</p> <p>One of Photoshop's many strengths is the versatility of its tools, and this has been stretched to new limits. Filter previews are bigger, the Liquefy tool has been enhanced, brush parameters have been extended, and commonly used tool settings can be saved as presets. This means you can virtually do away with the toolbox, instead selecting tools with exactly the settings you need from the presets palette.</p>
5	<p>Adobe Photoshop Elements by Adobe</p>	<p>Included with some Scanner Software Packages: Free</p> <p>Used Amazon Price for 3.0: \$45-\$70</p> <p>New Amazon Price for CS: \$75 to \$100</p> <p>Software: I use the software for editing photos and scans. I also use the software as the shell from which I scan. When I scan software inside the Photoshop 7.0 or Elements software I am able to scan 50 -100 items at time. I am able to automate routine functions. Per 100 times scanned, I am saving 1.0 to 1.5 hours. Buying the software a generation behind simplifies the ability to get into a more expensive software without the loss of key features that I want.</p> <p>Source for (Latest Version): http://www.adobe.com/products/photoshopelw/in/</p>	<p>Product Description</p> <p>Adobe Photoshop Elements 4.0 combines power and simplicity to help you do it all. Enhance your photos with powerful new tools that help you adjust specific areas of a photo in less time and even remove red eye automatically as you download. Create fun composites with new features that let you make more precise selections and smooth out rough edges. Show off your creativity in more entertaining ways, including enhanced slide shows with superior pan and zoom effects, voice narration, and multiple music tracks. Find every face - Instant finding of all photos with faces, for easier tagging and better sorting Turn digital pictures into professional Kodak prints - they'll be delivered to your door with just a click. Show photos and slideshows on your TV, either over a</p>

			home network or from a video CD. Easily access your photos and add, delete, or move folders using the Folder View. Start editing right away with the quick-launching Editor mode.
6	FireFox by Mozilla	Price: Free Software: I use web browser just like I do Microsoft Explorer. A very nice browser. For the pages I can't use Foxfire, I use Explorer. See: Google Pack Source: http://www.mozilla.com/firefox/	The award-winning, free Web browser is better than ever. Browse the Web with confidence - Firefox protects you from viruses, spyware and pop-ups. Enjoy improvements to performance, ease of use and privacy. It's easy to import your favorites and settings and get started.
7	Google Desktop by Google	Price: Free Software: Imagine the ability to find documents/files in your computer at the speed of a Google search. Great for the genealogist. Saves extensive amounts of time finding software. See: Google Pack Source: http://desktop.google.com/	Need to find something in the maze of folders on your hard drive? Google Desktop might be the answer.
8	Google Pack by Google	Price: Free Software: A very nice set of software for managing and working with genealogy files, research, protecting your computer. Includes: There's Picasa, a basic photo editor and organizer, Google Desktop for quick PC searches, Firefox for streamlined browsing, and even basic virus and spyware protection, courtesy of Symantec and Ad-Aware. Also has some other very nice software included. Source: http://pack.google.com/	The new software offering is basically a quick and easy (and free) way to get "essential" software onto your PC. There's Picasa, a basic photo editor and organizer, Google Desktop for quick PC searches, Firefox for streamlined browsing, and even basic virus and spyware protection, courtesy of Symantec and Ad-Aware. If you're one of our readers, you're probably a PC enthusiast who has most of this stuff already. But we think Google did a pretty good job of anticipating the needs of novice computer users, and equipping them with useful tools. Many of the included apps are Editors' Choice award winners in their own right, and those that aren't still generally scored high marks in our reviews.
9	Google Picasa by Google	Price: Free Software: Imagine the ability to find photos in your computer at the speed of a Google search. Great for the genealogist. Saves extensive amounts of time finding and organizing photos/images. See: Google Pack Source: http://picasa.google.com/download/index.html	Picasa is software that helps you instantly find, edit and share all the pictures on your PC. Every time you open Picasa, it automatically locates all your pictures (even ones you forgot you had) and sorts them into visual albums organized by date with folder names you will recognize. You can drag and drop to arrange your albums and make labels to create new groups. Picasa makes sure your pictures are always organized. Picasa also makes advanced editing simple by putting one-click fixes and powerful effects at your fingertips. And Picasa makes it a snap to share your pictures – you can email, print photos at home, make gift CDs, instantly share via Hello™, and even post pictures on your own blog.
10	Google Screen Saver by Google	Price: Free Software: Nice feature where one can use family images as part of their screen saver. Nice way to teach family about heritage. See: Google Pack Source: http://labnol.blogspot.com/2006/01/install-google-screensaver-without.html	Enjoy your favorite photos when your computer is idle. Turn photos from your personal collection into a screensaver. View your photos as a full screen or as a virtual collage.

11	Google Talk by Google	<p>Price: Free Barry's Use: Nice tool if you are getting to Voice IP. Using the internet to make long distance calls. See: Google Pack Source: http://www.google.com/talk/</p>	Google Talk is a great way to do basic instant messaging and VoIP.
12	Google Toolbar by Google	<p>Price: Free Software: Nice tool if you are getting to Voice IP. Using the internet to make long distance calls. See: Google Pack Source: http://toolbar.google.com/index_xp.html</p>	With an effective pop-up blocker and handy links, it's the IE toolbar to beat.
13	Microsoft Excel by Microsoft	<p>Amazon Price for: \$160-\$190 Amazon Price for Microsoft Office 2003: \$300-plus Amazon Price for Microsoft Office 2003 Education Edition: \$120 When included with Hardware: Free Barry's Use: I use this software for developing spreadsheets for cataloging files, sorting and reviewing research, organizing content for presentations, writing family histories. Source: http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/FX010858001033.aspx Tutorial: http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training/default.aspx See also Microsoft Office : http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/default.aspx</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads data in any customer defined XML schema, without reformatting; you can manipulate XML data sources using charts, tables or graphs • Spreadsheets can be saved in a native XML file format, searchable by a program using industry standard XML • New visual XML mapping tool maps user-specified XML schema to fields in an Excel spreadsheet • Analyzes data better, with enhanced collinearity detection, sum of squared deviation calculation, normal distributions, and continuous probability distribution functions • Enhanced Smart Tags appear only when you hover the mouse over a defined range of cells
14	Microsoft PowerPoint by Microsoft	<p>Amazon Price for: \$175-plus Amazon Price for Microsoft Office 2003: \$300-plus Amazon Price for Microsoft Office 2003 Education Edition: \$120 When included with Hardware: Free Barry's Use: I use this software for all my presentations for work and family history classes. Source: http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/FX010857971033.aspx Tutorial: http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/training/default.aspx See also Microsoft Office : http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/default.aspx</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PowerPoint 2003 gives you the ability to create an impact with your ideas, whether it's in person or online! • Create rich-media presentations that deliver better communications -- whether you're doing marketing presentations, online learning or executive broadcasts • Improved audio and video options give you a wealth of backgrounds, templates and special effects to include in your presentation • Enhanced Smart Tags make it easier to manage and track different aspects of your presentation or project • Advanced multimedia support makes it easier to transfer PowerPoint files to a CD
15	Microsoft Word by Microsoft	<p>Amazon Price for: \$175-plus Amazon Price for Microsoft Office 2003: \$300-plus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate quickly and effectively with others--

		<p>Amazon Price for Microsoft Office 2003 Education Edition: \$120 When included with Hardware: Free Barry's Use: I use software for all word processing. It is compatible with essentially all the programs I use. Source: http://office.microsoft.com/en-ca/FX010857991033.aspx Tutorial: http://office.microsoft.com/en-ca/training/default.aspx See also Microsoft Office : http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/default.aspx</p>	<p>internally and across organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring information into your documents for more timely access to the information you need • Quickly find the information you need to complete your work • Create impressive-looking documents that help you work better together • Read documents more easily online with the new Reading Layout view
16	<p>Nuance Omipage by Nuance</p>	<p>Amazon Price: \$100-plus Amazon Older Version: \$25-\$50 Barry's Use: I use the software to help take printed documents and turn them into word files without having to retype. Excellent software. Source: http://www.nuance.com/omnipage/</p>	<p>OmniPage Professional 15, the flagship version of the world's best selling OCR software, is the most precise and efficient way to convert documents and forms into your favorite PC applications. Unrivaled OCR engines combine with advanced workflow technology to automate all your conversion needs. Whether you want to make paper digital, convert Quark files to Word, or create batches of PDF files, OmniPage is up to the task with superior accuracy (over 99%) and formatting. OmniPage Professional is the only product you need to convert, edit, archive and share all your paper and PDF documents.</p>
17	<p>PDF Convert Professional by Nuance</p>	<p>Amazon Price: \$70-\$90 Barry's Use: I have used the software to transform documents into PDF's. Software dramatically reduces size of documents for sharing. See also: Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Standard Source: http://www.nuance.com/pdfconverter/</p>	<p>Easily make PDF documents that are compact and easy to e-mail, are universally viewable, and print just as they would in the original application. The PDF Create! Assistant makes it simple to merge Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Visio, JPG, TIF and even PDF files into a single multi-page PDF document. What's more, you get all of the advanced features you need, including compatibility with other PDF applications, encryption and password security, compressed file sizes, font embedding, full color support, page merging and much more.</p>
18	<p>Roxio Easy CD & DVD Burning by Roxio</p>	<p>Amazon Price: \$18-\$25 Barry's Use: If you just want software to help with burning images to CD and DVD. This is a good alternative to Roxio Ease Media Center. Source:</p>	<p>Let your burner have some fun with Roxio Easy CD and DVD Burning. Now features faster burning, safer backup, fun music CD mixes and drag-and-drop easy photo tools. Rip, play, edit, organize and burn your digital music. Preserve memories in electronic albums, create photo slide shows, print or e-mail photos. Make DVD movies with professional transitions and animated menus to play on your home DVD player. Safely archive large data projects to multiple discs, or copy CDs and DVDs with one click. Create custom labels and inserts. From the makers of Easy Media Creator 7, the award-winning brand you can trust. For Windows 98 SE, Me, 2000 Pro, XP Home, XP Pro.</p>
19	<p>Roxio Easy Media Creator by Roxio</p>	<p>Amazon Price: \$40-60 Barry's Use: I use this to manage my DVD, CD's, and video management and burning to</p>	<p>With Easy Media Creator 8 Suite you've got the tools you require for producing professional-looking VCDs, SVCDs, or</p>

		<p>media. Source: http://www.roxio.com/en/index.jhtml;jsessionid=C0DHTGOL4SUNOCQAMYWRVQQ?_requestid=3616163</p>	<p>DVDs - just by clicking a mouse. Create the very best in custom CD mixes, produce excellent high-quality slideshows, and backup DVDs and DivX movies. All this and more, compiled into an easy-to-use, fully integrated product. Stunning new content templates and features from over 20 premium products. Transform still photos with stunning pan and zoom effects. Take complete control of video with advanced timeline editing tools organize with Media Manager; password-protect and encrypt private data.</p>
20	<p>ScanSoft Dragon Naturally Speaking 8 by Nuance</p>	<p>Amazon Price: \$75-\$150 Barry's Use: I use the software in transcription. When I conduct an oral interview or desire to transcribe a written document (notes), I will listen to the interview and then speak into my digital recorder the information I want to transcribe. Once I am done I will place the recorder in its docking station. The tape recorder interacts with the voice recognition software and automatically types in Word the information I recorded at 99% accuracy. I can transcribe an hour tape in about 90 minutes start to finish. I do limited editing. This saves about 3 hours for each hour of taped interview or 30 minutes hand written page. See Barry's Hardware: Olympus DS 3300 Source: http://www.nuance.com/naturallyspeaking/standard/</p>	<p>Product Description Work faster and more productively by voice! Dragon NaturallySpeaking 8 is an accurate speech recognition product from ScanSoft that delivers up to 99% accuracy. Perfect for the PC enthusiast or home office user, the system replaces slow and tedious typing with the simplicity of using your voice to turn speech into text at up to 160 words per minute. Create e-mail, instant messages, documents and spreadsheets more than 3 times faster than typing. Plus, you can use your voice to start programs, use menus and surf the web on your PC. Includes a free high-quality headset microphone with noise-canceling technology.</p>
21	<p>SnagIt by Techsmith</p>	<p>Amazon Price: \$25-\$0 Barry's Use: I use this software to capture documents, photos, census, etc. that are related to genealogy research. Essentially it is my electronic photocopy. I capture everything at TIFF or JPEG. Source: http://www.techsmith.com/</p>	<p>Using SnagIt, you can select and capture anything on your screen, then easily add text, arrows, or effects, and save the capture to a file or share it immediately by e-mail or IM. Capture and share an article, image, or Web page directly from your screen. Or, capture and share any part of any application that runs on your PC. Try SnagIt today, and you'll immediately notice all the ways it makes your daily tasks much more efficient and enjoyable.</p>
22	<p>Sound Forge Audio Studio by Sony</p>	<p>Amazon Price: \$45-\$70 Barry's Use: I use this software to help in recording and editing oral interviews from tape to digital files. Source: http://psp.sonymediasoftware.com/products/soundforgefamily.asp</p>	<p>Product Description Sound Forge Audio Studio software is everything you need to produce professional-quality audio on your home computer. Record just about anything, edit and restore audio, burn your own CDs, create streaming media, and convert audio files — all using simple commands such as cut, copy, and paste. Apply studio-quality audio effects such as EQ, delay, chorus, reverb, and more. Liven up recordings with the included 1,001 Sound Effects. Import and edit your own music from CDs and MP3s. Eliminate clicks, pops, and other noise. Exclusive Show me how tutorials provide interactive, step-by-step help while you work. Perfect for podcast creation!</p>
23	<p>Symantec Norton System</p>	<p>Amazon Price: \$25-75</p>	<p>From Protection to Detection Included</p>

	<p>Works by Symantec</p>	<p>Barry's Use: I use this software as my integrated security solution to protect my PC from viruses, optimize its performance, and safeguard information through backup and data recovery.</p> <p>Source: http://www.symantec.com/home_homeoffice/products/overview.jsp?pcid=sp&pvid=nsw2006</p>	<p>with SystemWorks 2006 are five leading utilities that are designed to help you protect your computer and get the most out of its computing power: Norton AntiVirus, Norton Utilities, Norton GoBack, CheckIt Diagnostics, and System Optimizer.</p> <p>This suite of integrated security solutions will protect your PC from viruses, optimize its performance, and safeguard your information through backup and data recovery. And with a LiveUpdate function that automatically downloads updates directly to your computer, SystemWorks 2006 is the most comprehensive way you can keep your PC and your valuable data protected.</p>
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Organizing Your Genealogical Data

1. Start out organized. Starting out organized is easier than getting organized. You will have more time to do research and spend less time looking for information you have misplaced. You will also save time by not duplicating research you have already done. When you are organized you

1. Know exactly what information you have for each ancestor.
2. Have a complete list of information you are missing for each ancestor.
3. Know exactly what resources you've checked, and what results you've found.
4. Know every book you've ever searched.
5. Remember whom you've contacted and what response you received.
6. Put your hands on any piece of information in your files in 10 seconds or less.

2. Choose an organization system that genealogists use. There are several popular genealogy organization systems. Research the systems and use the one that fits your style and one that you will use. Look for a system that will give you

1. Quick access to genealogical documents, notes, and research tools that you have already gathered.
2. A place to put new documents and notes so you can easily find them again.
3. A way to store and use paper files and documents in relation to a computer genealogy management program.
4. A filing system that will preserve what you have collected to pass on to the next generation.

Recommendation: I have evaluated and started several filing systems. I took a class from Mary E. V. Hill on how to organize and I went home and reorganized my genealogy papers using her system. It is extremely flexible—the more ancestors you find, the more expandable and flexible the system becomes. It can be multi-generational and strictly linear at the same time. My out of pocket costs were very minimal. This system is quickly and easily accessed by the researcher and mildly-interested relatives alike.

Check out the system at these links:

<http://www.123genealogy.com/organizer/instructions/index.htm>

Color Coding System

http://www.familysearch.org/Eng/Search/RG/guide/ALL_REF_DOC_-_Organizing_Paper_Files.asp?Locality=undefined&Id=undefined&Event=undefined&Date=undefined&DateId=undefined&ActiveTab=undefined&FirstEntry=undefined&StrategyId=undefined&GuidedPathId=undefined&ArchiveId=undefined&CombinedSubject=undefined&WorkingId=undefined&FocusId=undefined&FocusLocality=undefined&WorkingTab=undefined&FocusTab=undefined&SubjectBar=undefined&MaxTabs=undefined&AlphaCode=undefined&Subject=undefined&BlueBar=undefined&Guide=undefined&GuideId=undefined&Section=undefined&GuideTab=1

Backup Your Data

Backup Your Data—Need we say more? In conjunction with organizing your data I would like to add a couple of lines about data backup. When I think about my genealogy research, I realize without the computer, scanner, digital camera, printers, and many other peripherals, I would have been able to complete very little of what I have been able to.

I think of projects I have worked on the last couple of years where thousands of documents and photos were captured electronically as both a means of preservation and conducting research. The work exceeds 200 gigs of data. Much of the work has been cataloged. Copies of the images have been distributed to other genealogists to help research. Photos and family histories have been inexpensively shared with family as a way to help them understand their heritage. Many of the images are up loaded to a family history site to share with our family world-wide. Some images have been exchanged with other researchers to help in joint collaboration on a particular project. I think of the many hours I've spent working at researching, preserving, and sharing my family history.

How incredibly sad it would be if it were all gone, if I didn't have a backup. Recently, my main "Genealogy Research Hard Drive" gave up and died. Thank goodness I had a backup. Sometimes it is possible to recover data from a drive failure.

There are no excuses for not having a backup plan.

What genealogy data should I backup? With as much data as is stored on a modern computer system, how do you decide what to backup? Should you just put the entire system on a CD/DVD, external hard drive or tape drive and be done with it? There are several problems with putting your entire system on a backup, not the least of which is the cost of hard drives and CDs. Also, the time to perform a backup is increased when the entire system is stored.

As long as you have the original CDs for your software, there is no need to include the programs themselves in backups. For example, your operating system and word

processor shouldn't be backed up. The data files, however, cannot be recreated so you should include them in backups.

You **DO** want to backup:

- All your web pages, databases, and anything that you made or would have trouble replacing
- All the information from your financial software
- All genealogy images
- All genealogy databases
- Important correspondence
- Internal documents (important memos and the like)
- Anything you would suffer for lack of if it were lost

You **MIGHT** want to backup:

- Preferences or bookmarks from web browsers
- Your personal settings for how *your* computer works
- Anything that would be a nuisance if it were lost

You probably **DON'T** need to backup:

- Your operating system, as long as you have the original disks
- Your software, as long as you have the original disks
- Strictly temporary files
- Anything that you are **CERTAIN** you won't need if the entire computer becomes rubbish

3. When should I backup? How many days worth of information could you afford to lose if your computer crashed? What about if your office or home burned down? What about if most of your city was wiped out by a tornado or a flood?

The answers to these questions will tell you how often you should do a backup, and roughly where you should store them.

I usually backup my genealogy files one time per week and sometimes more often, especially if I have been doing extensive scanning. If you are actively entering data or merging data into your file, backup the file on which you are working before you start the merge and then backup again every couple of hours and when you are ready to stop for the day.

Of course this will vary on whether you had added any new information to your genealogy database. Then make sure you have the backup in a secure place (e.g., your office, a friend or relative's house, a safety deposit box) away from your home in case there were a fire. Exchange backups weekly.

Test your backup files occasionally to make sure that they really work. If you use CDs or DVDs for your backups, then backup your files on more than one and then rotate them

each time. That way if one gets scratched, broken, or otherwise damaged you'll have a fairly recent backup on another CD.

Some genealogists have monthly or six-month backups that are stored somewhere distant. It's a matter of choice, and what risks you want to take.

Any backup plan is simply a way of controlling risk. You risk losing a day's, a week's, a month's or a year's data - instead of risking losing it all. When devising your backup plan, think about how much risk you are willing to take.

Where to backup? Backup media pros and cons. Backup media for small computer systems must be versatile, inexpensive, fast, and most importantly, easy to use.

The challenge in choosing a backup device today isn't a lack of choice—but, because there are so many options, it's knowing which one best satisfies your needs.

To help you decide which one's best for you, the following list is the most common removable backup media with strengths and weaknesses for each:

1. 3.5-inch Floppy Disks

a. Pros

3.5-inch disks are inexpensive, portable and most computers have the hardware to use them.

b. Cons

The 3.5-inch floppy has little backup potential, as single disks only hold 1.44 megabytes (MB) of information (approximately 400 pages of text), making them useful only for backing up small files and folders. They also have slow data transfer speeds, are easily damaged, are vulnerable near magnets and only preserve data for a few years.

2. USB Flash Drives

(Also called pen drives, jump drives, thumb drives, key drives and memory sticks)

Pros

USB flash drives are fairly new and extremely popular. Two variations are USB 1.0 and USB 2.0; the USB 1.0 stores up to 512 MB and USB 2.0 drives currently hold up to 4 GB (over 4,000 MB) of data. USB 1.0 drives are good for small backups and USB 2.0 drives are excellent for large jobs.

The transfer speeds on USB flash drives are also excellent. A USB 1.0 transfers from 1.5 to 12 megabits per second (MB/s) and the USB 2.0 transfers up to 480 MB/s. USB flash drives are reusable (if you want to store one backup at a time) or can only be used once for archiving.

USB flash drives are a snap to install (just plug into a free USB port on your computer), durable and highly portable—fitting into the smallest of pockets. They have up to a decade of data retention and are not vulnerable to magnets. USB 1.0 drives are fairly inexpensive.

Cons

High-end USB 2.0 drives can be expensive and if you purchase a new USB flash drive for each new archive performed, your backup costs can increase dramatically. Due to their small size, USB flash drives are more easily misplaced.

3. Zip Drives

Pros

Zip drives are a "second generation" floppy disk, which some predicted would eventually replace the 3.5-inch floppy disk. Zip disks, are faster, more durable and hold more information than 3.5-inch disks.

There are three different sizes of zip drives; 100 MB, 250 MB and 750 MB—all are fine for small backups and are less expensive than USB flash drives.

Zip disks can be used over and over for backup or once as archive storage. Zip drives are easy to install and share between computers and are fairly portable—some newer models using USB ports. Zip disks have a data-retention life of up to a decade.

Cons

In order to use Zip disks, you must also buy the Zip Drive, which can be expensive. Storing several disks can be cumbersome since there isn't a big selection of Zip storage cases available. Zip disks are not as portable as a flash drives and, unfortunately, are becoming less common.

4. CD Technology

Pros

CD burning technology is an especially good media for backup archives. CDs come in two varieties—rewritable CDs (CD RWs), which can be rewritten up to 1,000 times, and CD ROM discs (CD Rs), which are cheaper than CD RWs, but are limited to one use.

Holding between 650 to 700 MB of data, CDs are more than adequate for small backups and have a transfer rate of 3 MB/s for 20x CD drives and 8MB/s for 52x CD drives.*

CDs are portable, easy to store and carry and most new computers come with CD burning drives. CDs are an inexpensive backup media, have a 5 to 10 year lifespan and are not susceptible to magnets.

Cons

If your computer does not have a CD burner, you'll have to consider the cost of the hardware and installation fee. CDs can become scratched and unusable through mishandling and daily use.

5. DVD Technology

Pros

DVD burning technology is a fine choice for small or large backups since regular DVDs can store 4.7 GB and dual-layer DVDs store 8.5 GB. Like CDs, the discs come in both multi-use DVD RW and single-use DVD-R. DVD Rs can be used once for archives or, if you use DVD RWs, you can write to them over and over again (up to 1,000 times). DVD transfer speeds vary from 3.96 MB/s for 3x DVD drives up to 21.13 MB/s for 16x DVD drives.**

DVD technology is a good choice if your computer already has a DVD burner since DVDs are inexpensive. DVDs have an incredible data retention lifespan—30 to 100 years—and aren't susceptible to magnets. DVDs are portable and share many of the same qualities as CDs, including ample storage choices.

Cons

If you must buy a DVD burner and pay to have it installed, your investment cost rises. If handled improperly, DVDs can become scratched and unreadable.

1. External Hard Drives

Pros

External hard drives are hard drives, separate from your computer system, which you can dedicate to backup storage. With a storage capacity of 40 GB to over 250 GB, external hard drives are perfect for the large backup needs. Utilizing USB technology, external hard drives transfer data at speeds up to 480 MB/s for USB 2.0 drives.

External hard drives are simple to install—a cord plugs into your computer's USB port. External hard drives are portable, self-sufficient storage units that can be taken off-site for storage safety and are a must for anyone serious about large, frequent backups. They are durable and have long data retention—about 15 years.

Cons

Like your computer, external hard drives can be damaged if dropped or mishandled and are somewhat vulnerable to magnets. External hard drives are an expensive investment, ranging from about \$100 to hundreds of U.S. dollars for models with the most storage.

Organizing Your Workspace for Your Home Family History Center

The foundation of your home office is your work space. This is your desk, chair, and functionality of being able to work comfortably with paper, computer, etc., in doing your research and other tasks. The following are a few basics to remember.

1. **Do try to arrange your space in an L-shape or triangle, with a swivel-style desk chair in the middle of the configuration.** With a spin of your seat or a slight roll backward or to the side, all essentials are within arm's reach.
2. **Don't skimp on comfort, especially when it comes to your desk chair.** Choose one with a cushioned seat and back, adjustable height so your feet are flat on the floor, a back that tilts and curves, and wheels on the bottom to get around easily. Be sure to consider comfort and ergonomics. Applying ergonomics in your home office can spell the difference between working healthy, productively, and safely, while helping you avoid repetitive stress injury.

If you write often on your dining table, the constant bending may affect your back. If you are sitting down in front of the computer for long periods of time, working with a rigid, nonadjustable, or "executive" type chair can lead to physical complaints. The forces and pressures challenging your body's health from using a computer demand an appropriate ergonomic chair.

The wrong desk and chair can make you susceptible to ergonomic disorders such as backache, headaches, eyestrain and other irritations and inconveniences. Fatigue, loss of concentration, and irritability can also be attributed to the use of the wrong furniture.

3. **Do group equipment and furnishings into different centers of operation.** These might include your computer, phone/fax, mail handling area, and worktable.
4. **Don't be stingy about storage space and lighting.** Put in as many cabinets, cubbies, and shelves as you can without crowding your workspace. Illuminate individual work areas with their own direct lights.

In buying lighting, match the type to task. Ambient lighting, which lights up the room, should be uniform and moderately bright. You may also want to have overhead lighting and floor lamps. Also keep the room from getting stuffy by providing the proper ventilation to room. Choose a space with windows that you can open to keep air circulating.

5. **Do plan with portability in mind.** Cordless phones and laptops allow you to move your work close to your children, if necessary. Other portable conveniences are furniture on casters, baskets that can quickly be repositioned when needed, and a rolling cart to easily transport files and correspondence so you can work in the kitchen, family room, or even outside for an hour or so.

- 6. Don't set up your office where it should be; put it where you want it to be.** Your office should first and foremost be a place that you like to be, where you can be inspired to work and be your creative best. You may have a spare room in your house for your office in the basement; but your allergies to molds may prevent you from staying and working in your office. The space under the stairs may be a good spot for your office, but it does not have enough electrical sockets to support all your electronic equipment. The spare bedroom may have a good view outside, but the room is too small to accommodate all your files and materials. Your space may be too cramped in the little nook so that your cabinets couldn't be opened because the printer table blocks it.

Set-up shop away from the busy areas in your home. Make sure your home office is as far as possible from potential distractions such as the kitchen, front door, family traffic and a lot of noise. This is especially important if you have children and will have child care in the house during the day. If you can see or hear your children and they can see you, it will be difficult for both you and your kids.

If the room that you want is not ideal to your needs, make the necessary changes based on your wants and needs as you'll be spending a lot of time there. Go to the hardware or office supply store and check if they have the right storage system for you. You can also hire a carpenter to build in a desk and bookshelves to accommodate an unusually shaped room. The home office market has grown enough to make the furniture solutions much more interesting than they were even five years ago.

- 7. Do personalize the room.** Hang up children's drawings and other favorite artwork, propping family photos on the desk. Paint the walls your favorite color, including a knickknack or two, and adding other special touches. These not only make for a cozier space, they can help reduce stress.
- 8. Don't do everything at once if money and/or time are tight.** Start with the bare-bones basics, adding on when you can afford more. You may even consider hiring a professional designer to help you make improvements. Most charge between \$75 and \$150 an hour for a consultation, and it would not take long to toss around some design ideas.
- 9. Project 25 percent more space than you currently require, especially if you're remodeling your home to accommodate an office or buying a new house with work-at-home potential.**
- 10. Organize your supplies.** Similar to a corporate environment, you need to arrange your supplies in a way that promotes efficiency. You need not lift two stacks of bond paper just to get to your business stationery located at the furthest end of your cabinet. Hide supplies that you do not need everyday such as extra rolls of tape and piles of bond paper; but keep within reach a small cache of supplies at your desk or near enough that you can reach them. Stack extra supplies under

your desk, out of kicking range. If space permits, keep extra supplies in a cabinet or cupboard. If it makes you more comfortable and efficient, consider hanging the phone on the wall near your desk to help free some desk space.

11. **Limit the things in your home office to items that you need for your work, research, etc.** Clear out all of the old clutter in your home office area. If you set-up your home office in your attic, make sure that you have enough room for all your requirements. It is difficult to work in a place filled with stuffs irrelevant to your business. However, if you cannot remove these things from the room, make sure that you move them out of your vision. Create visual and psychological separation by enclosing the area with a screen or a decorative barrier could be a way to address this problem. Tidiness of the office environment can help improve your productivity.

12. **Generate a list of the minimum furniture you require to avoid buying things that you do not need.** Space, for one, is a problem for most home offices. Oftentimes, you will need to furnish your office vertically to maximize every square inch of your office. Buy furniture for its functionality, not for image. If furniture is not appropriate for the way your people work, it becomes impractical. The following is an example of some of the items to consider as part of your home office:
 - a. **Your desk:** Generally, the bigger the better, with lots of room for a computer monitor, keyboard, and telephone, and plenty of space to spread out your work.

 - b. **Your chair:** Although you may be able to get by with used desks and shelves, second-hand file cabinets, and cheap tables, do purchase a new, high-quality chair. Chair padding breaks down over time, so avoid buying a used work chair.

 - c. **File cabinets:** To keep your home office organized, you need lots of filing cabinets for all the paper you generate. File your paperwork early, and file it often!

 - d. **Bookshelves:** Bookshelves are a great way to store all kinds of work materials — not just books.

 - e. **Work tables:** If you have the space, a work table or two can provide a much-needed work area for those times when your desk just isn't big enough to accommodate a project.

 - f. **Storage:** Closets, garages, attics, and the like all make great places to store or archive your product inventory, paperwork, or other work-related materials. Don't forget: You can write storage space off of your taxes, too, if you take the home-office deduction.

- g. **Lots of office supplies!** Stock up for several months' worth of supplies at a time if you have the space. Or stock items on a just-in-time basis by ordering via the Internet or by phone.
- h. **Computers.** Whether you get a fully equipped desktop computer, a notebook computer, or a sleek palmtop, your home-based business can use a computer.
 - i. **Desktops:** Desktop computers (as opposed to portable laptops or handheld palmtops) are the workhorses of the technologically up-to-date home office — they have the most powerful microprocessors (to make them fast), the most memory (to be able to store lots of data), the largest monitors (to see your work more clearly), and the latest technical innovations (like faster modems for connecting to the Internet). Set a budget for your computer purchase, and buy the best one you can afford.
 - ii. **Notebooks:** If you're on the road a lot, and you need many of the capabilities of your desktop computer but in a package that's portable, choose a notebook computer.
- i. **Personal digital assistants (PDAs):** PDAs, such as the units produced by Palm Computing, have captured the most interest among business-people — some even have keyboards and small, built-in color monitors. Often called palmtops, PDAs are used primarily to track appointments, to-do lists, and phone numbers.
- j. **Printer and scanner:** Printers come in two main flavors: laser printers to print text and color ink-jet printers for graphics and photos. You may want a scanner to input photos or graphics.
- k. **Internet access:** Whether you go with a service such as America Online, CompuServe, the Microsoft Network, AT&T WorldNet, or EarthLink, the Internet is where you (and your business) need to be. Here are four popular ways to connect to the Internet:
 - i. **Phone modems:** Phone modems are still the most common way to connect your computer to the Internet.
 - ii. **DSL:** Digital subscriber lines (DSL) are cost effective and becoming more common in the marketplace.
 - iii. **Cable modems:** Cable modems bring the promise of high-speed access — generally more than 20 times faster than a standard phone modem — over your existing cable television lines (if available in your area). If you do a lot of work on the Internet, it's definitely worth the extra cost. Don't forget — you may be able to write the expense off of your taxes.

iv. **Satellite:** For a home-based business that requires high-speed access to the Internet but is located in a rural area, simply stick a small dish antenna on your home, hook it up to your computer, and you're off and running!

1. **Telephones:** Your phone is the most basic and essential of all business tools. Standard phones today come with all kinds of features, including programmable speed-dial numbers, multiple-line capability, speakerphone operation, conference call capability, and headset jacks. Many local phone companies also offer a menu of all kinds of phone services, including call forwarding, priority ringing, last call dialed, conferencing, and more.

Buy a phone that doesn't require an external power source to operate. You'll know why the first time your power goes out. Phones that rely on an external power source will die an immediate death, while phones that don't will live on. You probably also want to consider the following:

- i. Wireless phones include cellular telephones, digital phones, and portable phones that you carry around your home and home office. Cell phones are popular for home-based business people whenever you need to conduct business away from your office.
- ii. Internet phones — which turn your computer into a telephone — They are just now becoming a viable option to enable anyone with a computer to call someone on another computer (using the same software, of course) for free.
- iii. Voice mail is quickly taking over from answering machines. You can get voice mail on a regular or wireless phone, a pager, or on your computer — often for little or no additional charge.

m. **Fax machines and copiers.** When a document absolutely, positively has to get there right now, a fax machine is a cost-effective option. A stand-alone fax unit only sends and receives fax messages. An all-in-one printer/fax/scanner/copier can save you money and space by taking on the functions of many other office machines. A computer as a fax machine can be used when the item to be faxed resides within the computer's hard drive.

n. **Copier.** If you have an all-in-one printer/fax/scanner/copier, use it to make copies. You can also use your scanner and printer as a copier. Or you can buy a small desktop copier from warehouse stores and office supply superstores. If your needs are greater than that, you can lease a full-service office copier.

Choosing the Equipment for your Home Family History Center

Like furnishings, equipment is a personal choice. The following are tips to assist in your evaluation.

1. PC Buying Tips

Are you ready to purchase a PC? The following are recommendations for specifications that will fit the needs of the average user.

1. A 3-GHz Pentium 4 or 2.4-GHz Athlon XP 4000+ processor. For everyday work, word processing, spreadsheets, and e-mail, you don't need the latest, greatest, and most expensive processor. In PC World tests, current AMD processors of the same clock speed perform some tasks faster than Intel processors.
2. At least 512MB memory. Anything less will slow your work, especially if you plan to run several applications under Windows XP. Buy as much as you can afford, up to 1GB.
3. Be careful when you buy integrated graphics. If you buy a computer with integrated graphics, ask if it has a PCI Express slot. If it doesn't, you won't be able to upgrade your graphics chip.
4. Subwoofers improve sound. Adding a sound system with a subwoofer (a large speaker that produces very low bass tones) can dramatically improve the sound quality of a home system, even if the speaker set is inexpensive.
5. A 17-inch flat-panel LCD monitor. CRTs are dead. Unless you're really pinching pennies, a 17-inch LCD will let you see your documents with greater definition (or at a higher resolution) than smaller displays would.
6. A rewritable DVD drive. Floppy drives have faded away. CD-RW-only drives are on the way out. Though your computer might still include a CD-RW drive, many users find that thumb drives, CD-RW/DVD-ROM combination drives, and recordable DVD drives are better options for data storage and transfer. They allow you to back up important documents (up to 1GB on a thumb drive, 700MB on a CD, and 4.7GB on a standard DVD), share files with colleagues, and create custom audio or video discs. A CD-RW may be all that most people need, but a DVD recorder lets you back up larger amounts of data.
7. A 60GB or larger hard drive. A 40GB hard drive is fine for simple word processing or Web browsing tasks, but you'll likely fill that hard drive pretty quickly. In the long run, it's best to buy more hard drive than you think you'll need. Today's largest hard drives reach 500GB, but unless you're planning to use your PC as a mini server for your office database or for electronic entertainment, a smaller drive may be more cost-effective.
8. Connectivity up front. Many PCs now offer a pair of USB ports on the front of the case, so you can connect multiple peripherals without having to fumble around in

back. If this is important to you, look for PCs with up-front FireWire (IEEE 1394) ports, audio and video connectors, and USB 2.0 ports.

9. Graphics cards for novice gamers. If you want to do some gaming and you're keeping an eye on the future, get a mainstream graphics board, which can be about \$200. You'll need a card with a built-in TV tuner if you plan to record video from your TV. (See "How to Buy a Graphics Board" for details on specific cards.)

2. Notebook Buying Tips

Are you ready to buy a notebook? The following are recommendations for specifications that will fit the needs of the average user.

1. A 1.73-GHz Pentium M processor. For everyday work--word processing, spreadsheets, and e-mail--you don't need the latest, greatest (read most expensive) Pentium processor, but thankfully, with the Pentium M, you get smooth performance and long battery life. (Check latest prices.)
2. 1Gig of memory or more. Anything less will slow your work. (Check latest prices for notebooks with 512MB of memory or more.)
3. Supplemental battery. They usually last longer on one charge than nickel-metal hydride batteries and don't need to be replaced as often. If you want more time away from an outlet, buy a notebook with a modular bay capable of holding a supplementary power pack. Secondary batteries usually cost between \$99 and \$200.
4. A 14.1-inch wide-screen. A screen larger than 12.1 inches eases eyestrain. Unless you're really pinching pennies, bigger is better. (Compare prices for notebooks with 14.1-inch screens.)
5. A 60GB hard drive. Unless you generate multimegabyte music or database files, or install more than one office suite, 60GB is plenty big.
6. Touchpad pointing device. Pointing devices are a matter of taste. However, most people find a touchpad easier to use than a pointing stick. For people who can't choose between a touchpad and an eraserhead pointing device, some notebooks include both. If you buy one of these, make sure it provides two sets of mouse buttons--one for the touchpad and the other for the eraserhead--so you don't have to stretch to reach.
7. Multiple USB ports. Many notebooks now come with two or more USB 2.0 ports, useful for connecting more of the latest peripherals.
8. All-in-one design. Unless you need a lightweight notebook, opt for one with an internal bay for both the optical drive. This design enables you to swap in other devices, such as an extra hard drive or second battery.

3. Digital Camera Buying Tips

Are you ready to buy a digital camera? Recommendations for specifications will fit the needs of most genealogists.

1. Match megapixels to your use. Most point-and-shoot cameras offer at least 4 megapixels, which is plenty for producing 8-by-10-inch prints. Cameras with more megapixels will yield even larger prints and allow you to blow up a part of an image with less likelihood that the print will be blurry. If you plan to make only 4-by-6-inch prints, you don't have to shoot at the camera's highest resolution--and as a result, you can fit more shots on your memory card.
2. Look for rechargeable batteries and a charger. The cost of disposable batteries adds up over the long run. Some cameras can use AA batteries of any type--disposable or rechargeable. That capability can be helpful if your rechargeable batteries run out of juice and you don't want to wait while they replenish.
3. Get at least 3X optical zoom. Most cameras offer digital zoom in addition to optical zoom--and sometimes vendors combine the two specs to tout a high total zoom. But digital zoom results in photos that aren't nearly as good as those produced with an optical zoom.
4. Look for a low-light focusing aid. Some cameras have auxiliary lights that help them focus in dim settings. That's important for many indoor shots.
5. Try the camera before you buy. Some cameras have commands and menus that are easier to use than others, a comparison you can make only with a hands-on trial. Also evaluate the lag time between when you press the shutter button and when the camera actually takes the picture. Try the zoom lens--does it operate quickly and smoothly? Find out how long you must wait between taking pictures. And try the LCD viewfinder--in the sun if possible--to determine how easy it is to read.
6. Give extra consideration to a camera with a good selection of software. Look for useful packages like Adobe Photoshop Elements and Ulead Photo Impact for editing images, as well as applications for sharing them.
7. Don't base your decision on video capability. Any still camera's ability to take moving pictures is limited. If you want to shoot video, invest in a camera dedicated to the job.
8. Consider investing in a memory card reader. These readers act like an external hard drive attached to your PC or laptop, allowing you to download pictures directly from the storage media your camera uses. Many newer laptops have one or more memory card slots built in, as do some inkjet printers. If you have a second memory card, you

can keep shooting while the images download, rather than having to keep the camera hooked up to your PC.

4. Other Buying Tips

In addition to choosing a PC with the above specifications, PC shoppers can save money and avoid unnecessary hassle by following these tips:

1. Don't buy additional software unless you really need it. Purchase an operating system, an office suite, and an antivirus package. But if you need more, look for vendors' software bundles to upgrade your software. For as little as \$100, you can often upgrade from Microsoft Works Suite or a similar package to a full office suite like Microsoft Office XP Small Business Edition--a great value considering Office XP runs more than \$300 off the shelf.
2. Don't get caught up surfing price reductions. If you need a new PC now, don't wait a few months to see whether prices will drop further and upper-end performance will improve. Some readers find themselves stuck in an endless price-drop waiting game. Instead, decide when you need the system, and go for it.
3. Buy above minimum specs for the longest useful life span. If longevity is a priority (and if you can afford it), get something closer to, but below, the current top of the line. This will extend the useful life of your PC.
4. Check an LCD monitor's interface. Depending on the brand or model of LCD monitor, it could have one of several interface connectors--the part that plugs into the PC. These include the well-known VGA and the superior DVI connectors. If you're buying a nonbundled display, make sure it will work with the system you want--or that you at least have a money-back guarantee.
5. Upgrade at the time of purchase. Often, you can get a better deal on a larger hard drive or a better monitor when you first order your computer. Even doubling the size of a hard drive may add very little to the cost, and upgrading to a higher-quality monitor may add only \$100.
6. Avoid gimmicky keyboards to save money. Many vendors tout fancy keyboards with extra buttons for launching apps. Save some money by choosing the cheapest option unless you have a specific need for the fancier one.
7. Get the scoop on the vendor before you buy. Check out PC World's annual Reliability & Service survey, where readers tell us which PC makers provide the best (and worst) technical support and warranty service.

5. Hard-Drive Buying Tips

Are you ready to make the plunge with a big new hard drive for your PC?

Recommendations follow for what you should consider, both before you buy the drive and when you're actually shopping.

1. Do you have a newer PC? Newer PCs take better advantage of a new drive's increased performance and capacity. A system with a slow CPU and limited RAM won't be able to use the full performance potential of a new drive. With a really old PC, you're nearing the point of diminishing returns, where putting any money into it may be a poor investment. However, if your computer is still working acceptably for you, it may be worthwhile to increase its storage capacity. A plus for buyers in this camp: If you install the new drive as your main drive for running the Windows OS and applications, you may get an appreciable performance improvement. Older PCs may need both a PCI interface card to get the best drive performance and a vendor-supplied driver to be able to recognize the full capacity of large drives.
2. Make sure there's space in the case. Most desktop PC cases have at least one, and sometimes several, internal drive bays--places where you can mount extra hard drives. But check your manual (or open the case); some of the smaller low-profile cases don't have room for additional internal drives, in which case you won't be able to use both the old and new drive at the same time.
3. Oversize your purchase. It's smart to buy a drive with more capacity than you think you'll need. If you're absolutely sure that you won't be using multimedia-intensive applications (such as editing video or storing digital photos or MP3 audio files) that eat up huge amounts of space, you might not need the largest-capacity drives. Anticipate your future needs when deciding on the size of your new drive, especially if you plan to keep your existing PC for a couple of years.
4. Match the drive and interface speed. The ATA/100 and ATA/133 interfaces of current drives are often faster than the internal interfaces of an older PC. (Check your PC manual or contact your computer vendor to make sure.) An easy-to-install interface card (about \$50) can ensure that you get maximum performance from your new drive. If you want to add a SATA-300 drive to a system with SATA-150 connectors, just do it. The nominally slower interface should not choke the performance of the SATA-300 drive.
5. Look for bargains. Competition among hard-drive makers is intense, and dealers often run specials that allow you to pick up a new drive for an amazingly low price. But these deals tend to be on smaller-capacity drives. Don't expect specials on the largest-capacity drives--they're often in short supply, so they sell at close to list price until the next generation of drives appears.
6. Buy a kit. Hard-drive kits include mounting hardware, cables, detailed instructions, and (often) software that eases installation. A kit can also include an application for cloning your old hard drive onto the new one, which can then become your new main drive. If you're buying via mail order, be sure you're getting the kit. The alternative is a "bare drive," essentially just a drive in a box, often with no instructions except a technical data sheet. Bare drives can be a

bargain for experienced PC users, however, and plenty of online installation help is available.

7. Use add-on software. Power users who purchase a bare drive and aren't running Windows XP will need extra software to ease the process of integrating the new hard drive into their PC. Even if you buy a packaged drive upgrade kit, you might find the following software helpful. Symantec Norton Ghost and Acronis True Image help you clone a drive and back up your data. Symantec Norton Partition Magic lets you fine-tune how data is stored on your new drive.
8. Consider an external drive. Great for backing up your PC, many external drives come with one-touch backup buttons that make that process even easier. The fastest external hard drives are the new external SATA models. Make sure that you have at least one free internal SATA port for models that come with a pass-through cable, or buy a model that offers external SATA ports through a PCI interface.
9. Consider a network hard drive. They're a great choice for making photos, videos, music, and other files available to all the users on your network. They connect to your network via Ethernet and also typically include a print server for sharing a printer. Network hard drives with additional USB 2.0 ports let you connect external hard drives to expand storage if you run short.

6. Rewritable DVD Buying Tips

Are you ready to buy a rewritable DVD drive? Recommendations follow for buying a drive that will best suit the needs of the average user.

1. Decide if speed is important to you. At this writing, speed is not much of an issue, since the two write-once/single-layer DVD formats are identical. Keep an eye on double/dual-layer write speeds, though--many drives on the market don't support the fastest speeds possible.
2. Consider compatibility. Both DVD-R and DVD+R are highly compatible with current DVD players and DVD-ROM drives. Some older players might have better luck with DVD-R than DVD+R, simply because DVD-R has been around longer. Beware of DVD-RAM: The format can be useful, but it's poorly suited to burning to discs you plan to share with friends and family.
3. For desktop PCs, get an internal drive with an IDE interface. Since a rewritable DVD drive can read DVD-ROMs and CDs, and write to CD-R/RW, you can replace your existing CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, or even CD-RW drive without sacrificing functionality.
4. For external drives, or desktop PCs with few internal connections, consider the interface. With external drives, you'll see about the same speed from a FireWire drive as you would from a USB 2.0 drive. Costs for drives of each interface type

are similar, and for a few more dollars, you can often buy a drive that has the flexibility of both interfaces. To use a FireWire or USB 2.0 drive, you may need to buy a USB 2.0 or FireWire card for your PC, but on some desktops having such a card can make it easier for a rewritable DVD drive to coexist with multiple hard drives and/or other optical drives.

5. Make sure that the bundled recording software fits your needs. All manufacturers provide software with drives sold at retail; the software typically covers DVD and CD mastering (including audio CDs), DVD video authoring, and the ability to drag and drop data. However, some vendors add software for backup tasks and video editing.

7. Scanner Buying Tips

Are you ready to buy a scanner? For most uses, go flatbed. These common models are easy to use and versatile enough for most tasks.

1. Look for at least 2400-dpi optical resolution. Although these models cost a bit more than lower-quality units, they are worth the investment. Scanners with this level of resolution and color depth allow you to make reprints using state-of-the-art photo printers that will be almost indistinguishable from reprints made by photo outlets. Even if you don't need these capabilities now, it's better to anticipate growing needs rather than having to buy another new scanner when you need better resolution.
2. Check your PC's USB port. Almost all scanners can connect to a PC through a USB port. If you have a computer that is more than a couple of years old, it likely has a USB 1.1 port. Current scanner models have USB 2.0 connectivity, which provides faster transfer speeds. To use a USB 2.0 scanner at its optimum transfer speed, you'll either have to buy a new PC that has USB 2.0 ports or install a USB 2.0 card in your PC. Bottom line: If you scan a lot of large, high-resolution images, a fast interface can save you a lot of time.
3. One-touch buttons are a plus. Find a model that has preprogrammed buttons for photo scanning, e-mailing, and other common tasks. One-touch buttons can save you time and effort if you scan a lot of items.
4. Advanced options get big jobs done. For genealogy users and others who do high-volume or specialty scanning, advanced options such as automatic document feeders, transparency adapters, and a scan bed large enough for legal-size documents can make all the difference. Legal-size scan beds are also a huge plus for scanning large illustrations, diagrams, paintings, and labels (on product boxes, for instance), as well as tabloid-size pages.

8. Check Carefully the Bundled Software with Scanners

All scanners come bundled with the necessary software for reading an object, capturing an image from the scan head, and transferring it to your PC. But once you have the image in your computer, you'll probably want to resize or crop it, adjust the brightness and contrast, or remove the red-eye effect flash photography creates.

Most scanners include simplified versions of image-editing software so you can touch up color imperfections and optimize the files for e-mailing or printing. Higher-end scanner models may include Adobe Photoshop for more extensive image manipulation. Additionally, many scanners also ship with optical character recognition, or OCR, software that allows you to scan a printed document and convert it to text that you can edit on your PC.

9. General Monitor Buying Tips

Are you ready to buy a Monitor?

1. When it comes to choosing the monitor you will be staring at for the next few years, only your eyes can tell you if a monitor's image quality, resolution, and size are right for you. Don't buy displays over the Web or by mail order unless the seller has an unconditional return policy and, ideally, no restocking fee. Checking out models in a store can be helpful, but keep in mind that they are often hooked up to low-quality video signals and placed under different lighting from what you have in your office or home. If possible, try to find a vendor with a liberal return policy, so you can try the monitor in your own setting before committing to the purchase.
2. Check screen real estate. Make sure you have enough screen for what you need to do. Remember that the viewable area of a wide-screen monitor is generally comparable to the viewable area of a regular-format monitor that's 2 inches smaller. Similarly, the viewable size of a CRT is an inch to an inch and a half smaller than the advertised tube size--so if you're switching from a CRT to an LCD, you may not need as big a monitor as you think. The current sweet spots for display size are the 21-inch CRT or 19-inch regular-format LCD, both of which provide plenty of desktop space for most users.
3. Gain more screen space by using two monitors. Consider using multiple smaller monitors instead of one big one. With the right video card, you can run both simultaneously off the same PC. A pair of 17-inch LCDs will let you do video or image editing in one window, and word processing or Web browsing in the other. If the double footprint gives you pause, consider mounting two small LCDs on a stand. Look for monitors with good screen quality and the VESA Flat Panel Mounting Interface and an FPMI-compatible stand.
4. Consider USB ports. Universal Serial Bus connections are designed for quick and easy attachments of numerous peripherals. When USB debuted, the physical accessibility of a monitor made it a natural choice for housing a number of the

new, smart, hot-pluggable ports (although the inclusion of USB adds to a monitor's cost). The number of ports provided varies with different models, as does the number of ports that are up front versus on the back. Current monitors are likely to include USB 2.0 hubs. USB 1.1 is fast enough for hooking up lower-performance devices, such as keyboards, mice, and even broadband modems. USB 2.0 devices, such as CD-RW drives and hard drives, will work with USB 1.1 ports, but at lower speeds than with USB 2.0 ports.

5. Decide whether you want speakers. The inclusion of speakers in a monitor can be a nice way to save space on your desktop. But despite recent advances, their sound will rarely satisfy an audiophile. If you're picky about sound quality, save the money for a nice set of speakers with a subwoofer.

10. Digital Camcorder Shopping Tips

Are you ready to buy a digital camcorder? The following recommendations can help you find a camcorder that's right for you.

1. Check out the LCD screen in daylight, if possible. Some screens will wash out in bright sunlight, and you'll want to make sure you can easily see what you're recording in any conditions. If you can't see the screen in bright daylight, try using the viewfinder: It can help get the job done without eating up a lot of battery power.
2. Look at the lens's optical zoom ratio instead of the digital zoom ratio. With a digital zoom, the camcorder is only enlarging the image in the viewfinder instead of really giving you a closer look. The optical zoom spec is more important--you'll want at least 10X optical zoom.
3. For longer recording times, buy a higher-capacity battery. The battery that comes with most camcorders only lasts an hour or so. For \$50 to \$100, you can buy a longer-lasting battery, so factor that into your cost if you think you'll need it. (Remember, however, that larger batteries add to the camera's weight.)
4. Front-mounted microphones get better results. Top-mounted microphones tend to capture the voice of the person using the camera, and drown out everything else.
5. Buy an external microphone for the best sound. Factor in an extra \$50 to \$100 for an external microphone if you want the best sound possible. Of course, make sure your camcorder has a place for you to plug it in.
6. Try out the camera's controls before you buy. Sometimes the smallest camcorders can be difficult to use, especially if you have large hands. A larger model may work better for you if it's more comfortable to use.

7. Check out exposure controls. All camcorders offer a fully automatic mode, but different models have different manual and semi-manual exposure modes. For example, some models let you shoot at slower shutter speeds than others, or have aperture settings that allow in more light. Many also offer scene modes, which you might be familiar with from digital still cameras.
8. Low-light options let you shoot in the dark. Many cameras offer an infrared light or long shutter mode to help you capture images in dark settings.
9. Look for wide-angle shooting. If you own an HDTV, you'll get a full picture (no black bars at the top and bottom) if you shoot with a wide-angle model.
10. Know your format. Most camcorders record onto MiniDV tapes or DVD discs, but other formats are available such as Digital 8 and MicroMV. Keep in mind that MiniDV is the most widely available format--a boon if you find yourself short on tape while on vacation.
11. Digital 8 camcorders record on Hi-8 tapes and can also play back videotapes recorded on analog camcorders.
12. Don't expect to edit MicroMV tapes using most video editing programs; you'll have to use an editing program that supports the MicroMV compression format, or convert the tape into a format that the program understands.

11. MP3 Player Shopping Tips

Choosing the right MP3 player isn't that difficult, but one player does not fit all. People will want different things from their players.

1. Think about how you'll use the player. Joggers will almost certainly want a lightweight, flash-memory-based device, since hard drives don't react well to the shock of bouncing around all the time; audio aficionados who want lots of music at their fingertips should keep their eyes on the highest-capacity hard-drive models.
2. Try your favorite before taking it home. We can't stress this enough. Make sure you can use the on-screen display to navigate to a specific song, and ask a clerk to show you how to transfer music to the device, if possible. Always bring your own set of headphones to listen to the sound quality of each unit you're interested in.
3. Get the largest-capacity device you can afford. Whether you buy a flash- or hard drive-based MP3 player, make sure to choose a model with the largest storage capacity possible. Even if you don't think you'll need it now, you will probably be happy to have it later.

4. Pay close attention to the user interface. Does the player's menu system make sense to you, and is the interface easy to use? If you can't find the songs, artists, or albums you want to play quickly and easily, keep looking.
5. Mind your power options. While some flash-based portable players use replaceable alkaline batteries, most hard drive-based units feature a built-in rechargeable battery that cannot be easily removed. While these devices can keep going for tens of hours, if you're not going to be somewhere near a power outlet or a computer with a USB port, you might find yourself out of juice with no way to charge the player.
6. Look for wide file format support. All players should support the MP3 format; but if you prefer WMA, AAC, or Ogg Vorbis, make sure your player of choice can handle the files.
7. Consider a player with an FM tuner. Usually found on flash-based players, this feature isn't essential, but it's a nice addition--especially if you grow tired of your recorded music.
8. Do you need a carrying case? Some players come with a small carrying case, others don't. The more expensive and more fragile the player (hard-drive devices are the most delicate), the more likely you'll want a custom-fitted case to protect it.
9. Shop around, online and offline. MP3 players are widely available in almost every consumer electronics outlet, and their prices fluctuate. You can check prices from a variety of sources before you buy.

12. What equipment is helpful for Genealogy?

Earlier in the presentation it was discussed that hardware, software and furnishings could be added one project at a time (as the need presents itself) and over time you have surrounded yourself with various tools most often used in research and service to others. I am asked what equipment I use and how. The following is a list of the equipment I use in genealogy research.

It is important you understand this is simply a list of the equipment I use in genealogy research, for the projects and needs I have had. At the time of my analysis, they were what I considered to be the best solution based on price, functionality, and other related criteria.

Barry's Hardware Used to Help in Genealogy Research	
(as of August 1, 2006)	
Hardware and Peripherals	Barry's Notes, URL, and Estimated Prices
1 Camcorder-Sony Digital	Amazon.com priced equipment: \$250-\$600

	Handycam	<p>Barry's Use: I use when doing oral histories, images of the person and for all family related activities I want to remember.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
2	Camera—Cannon 5060	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$250-\$500</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use for all my digital photography.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
3	CD/DVD Burner-Sony External	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$75-\$150</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use for burning multiple disks at one time and as a backup when the other burners go down.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
4	Desktop Computer	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$500-\$1,500</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use for home production work such as scanning, video, etc. I have built the computer to handle media files and production work.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
5	Digital Recorder: Olympus DS 3300	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$250-\$450</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use the recorder/software in transcription. When conducting an oral interview or desire to transcribe a written document (notes), I listen to the interview and then speak into the digital recorder the information I want to transcribe. Once I am done I place the recorder in its docking station. The tape recorder interacts with the voice recognition software and automatically types in Word the information I recorded at 99% accuracy. I can transcribe an hour tape in about 90 minutes start to finish. I do limited editing. This saves me about 3 hours for each hour of taped interview or 30 min per hand written page.</p> <p>See Barry's Software: ScanSoft Dragon Naturally Speaking 8</p> <p>Source: http://www.olympusamerica.com/cpg_section/cpg_vr_digitalrecorders.asp</p>
6	External Hard drives—150 and two 300 Gig	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$150-\$200</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use as back-up files for my genealogy and computers.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
7	Ink Jet Printer—Cannon IP 85000	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$125-\$200</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use for very fine color photo printing.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
8	Ink Jet Printer—Epson 220 R	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$75-\$100</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use primarily for printing on inkjet printable CDs/DVDs and as a backup printer.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
9	Laptop Computer	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$600-\$1500</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use the printer for 90% of my printing.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
10	Laser Printer—Brother HL 1440	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$125-\$225</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use the printer for 90% of my printing.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
11	Micro Cassette Transcriber	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$75-\$150</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use the printer for 90% of my printing.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
12	Scanner—Epson 3200	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$250-\$300</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use for all my scanning</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals:</p>

		http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp
13	Tape Recorder—Micro Cassette	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$50-\$125</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use as a primary tool when doing voice only interviews.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>
14	Wireless Keyboard and Mouse	<p>Amazon.com priced equipment: \$250-\$450</p> <p>Barry's Use: I use for my primary computer, for travel and on-site scanning.</p> <p>Source for evaluating hardware and peripherals: http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/index/0,00.asp</p>

How to Avoid the Top Online Shopping Concerns

1. Secure Web Site

It's sometimes hard to tell a reputable site from a fly-by-night online store.

One basic way to assess whether a site is trustworthy and secure is to look for a padlock icon in the locked position in the lower right hand corner of your browser window. This padlock indicates the site uses encryption technology to transfer information from your computer to the online merchant's computer.

Another way to check whether a site is secure is checking the address field of the Web browser to make sure the site uses the https:// prefix. The "s" that is displayed after "http" indicates that Web site is secure.

Often, you do not see the "s" or a locked padlock until you actually move to the order page on the Web site. And, of course, it doesn't matter how secure a site is if it's run by an unscrupulous company. To verify the site you are shopping at is in good standing with customers check out the company's reputation with the Better Business Bureau's site.

Remember: Never send your credit card or bank account number via e-mail (if you must, break it up into two messages), and don't give out passwords, PINs, or the name of your bank.

2. Scrutinize a Site's Credentials

Sites often suggest they are reliable by displaying credential from third-party rating firms in the form of icons and seals of approval. Make sure seals, such as those for the BBB, Trustee, and Bizrate.com actually link to the sponsoring organization. For example, clicking the BBB seal should take you to it's merchant reports.

Also, make sure the specific credential means something. A site we recently browsed prominently listed a MasterCard SecureCode logo under a section of the site called "credentials." MasterCard SecureCode is a program to protect the online merchant from fraudulent charges and doesn't mean anything for the online buyer.

3. Beware of Bait-and-Switch Ploys

It's an age-old trick. A store advertises a great price for a product and then claims to have sold out of it when you want to buy it.

The salesperson participating in bait and switch will try high-pressure sales techniques to get you to buy a similar but different product--at a higher price.

Online, vendors sometimes will advertise a low price for something like a digital camera and then will try to persuade you to buy accessories you probably don't want or need as a way to jack up the price.

4. Tell the seller to buzz off if they try this sneaky sales technique.

Pricing Engines Don't Always Deliver the "Best Deals"

Pricing engines like Froogle and others are adept at directing you to the cheapest price of a given product. But often the best price isn't the "best deal."

Low-priced merchandise might be a lure to a scam where a site takes your money and delivers you nothing. Recently the New Jersey State Police made recent arrests involving just such scams. Items advertised for sale on eBay but never delivered included Xbox video game systems, designer handbags, laptop computers, and Rolex watches, the police said.

And ridiculously low prices should be a red flag that what you are buying might be counterfeit. According to investigators at Kessler International the most popular phony items sold are designer accessories and apparel, such as purses, watches, wallets, sunglasses, and jeans.

But tech products aren't immune. When buying a stand-alone software package, for instance, ask the vendor if the software is used, promotional, intended for another country (gray market), shareware, burned onto a CD-R, missing manuals, or an old version. If you're buying a PC, make sure that it includes the original CD-ROMs and licenses for all preloaded software. If the vendor balks, walk away.

5. Best Ways to Pay

If you're offered a choice of paying with a credit card, PayPal, or your debit card, go for the credit card. The Fair Credit Billing Act protects your transaction if you use a credit card. This law empowers you to withhold payment temporarily if you suspect that someone has stolen your card number. No matter what happens, likely the most you'll pay is \$50. Do not use ATM/debit cards; they're not well protected as credit cards.

And, if you pay a merchant with the popular escrow service PayPal and get ripped off, you have fewer resources for help than you would if you paid with your credit card. PayPal says it will investigate any complaint you make against a seller and will make "a best-effort" to resolve your complaint but "cannot guarantee funds recovery."

Be Skeptical of Vendor Reviews

Besides a BBB report, vendor reviews are one of the only things consumers have to judge an online merchant's reliability. Site reviews are offered through links at shopping engines like PriceGrabber.com and at sites like Epinions.com. (Note: PriceGrabber powers PC World's ProductFinder tool.)

PriceGrabber.com and epinions.com do a great job of policing their user reviews and weeding out fraudulent ratings. However the Internet is rife with tales of other price engines and consumer rating sites that have been targeted by cheats. To make themselves look good, online merchants abuse rating sites by submitting positive reviews for transactions involving them that never actually took place.

Get a sense of how trustworthy the reviewers themselves are by looking at the number of reviews each has posted and who else trusts their judgment.

6. Complain Loudly

If you're unhappy with your purchase, contact the seller via phone, e-mail, and/or U.S. mail. If that doesn't produce results, you may file complaints with your state attorney general, the Better Business Bureau, local media, the Federal Trade Commission, your state's department of consumer affairs, and other organizations like ConsumerWorld.org.

Also you may file your complaint with ratings sites Epinions, Complaints.com, Epubliceye.com, Resellerratings.com, and RipoffReport.com. You can also review the site in question at pricing engines PriceGrabber and Bizrate.com.

These sites won't get your money back. But by sharing your story with others, hopefully you'll help others steer clear of a bad merchant.

Resources

Resources used for this presentation have been:

1. 10 Common Home Office Mistakes
<http://www.powerhomebiz.com/vol84/homeoffice.htm>
2. Avoid the Top Online Shopping Gotchas
<http://www.pcworld.com/news/article/0,aid,123917,00.asp>
3. Cell Phone Shopping Tips
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bguides/0,guid,7,00.asp>
4. Choosing a Computer System for Digital Imaging
<http://www.photo.net/equipment/digital/computers>
5. Do's and Don'ts in Workspace Design
<http://www.powerhomebiz.com/Index/workspace.htm>
6. Genealogy Software Roundup 2006
http://genealogy.about.com/cs/genealogysoftware/a/software_2.htm
7. Hard-Drive Shopping Tips
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bguides/0,guid,20,00.asp>
8. Home Office Furniture Buying Tips
<http://www.powerhomebiz.com/vol12/furniture.htm>

9. How to Buy a Desktop PC
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bgguide/0,guid,14,00.asp>
10. How to Buy a Digital Camcorder
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bgguide/0,guid,27,00.asp>
11. How to Buy a Digital Camera
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bgguide/0,guid,12,00.asp>
12. How to Buy a DVD-Rewritable Drive
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bgguide/0,guid,28,00.asp>
13. How to Buy a Laptop
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bgguide/0,guid,13,00.asp>
14. How to Buy a Monitor
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bgguide/0,guid,9,00.asp>
15. How to Buy a Scanner
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bgguide/0,guid,10,page,4,00.asp>
16. MP3 Player Shopping Tips
<http://www.pcworld.com/howto/bgguide/0,guid,15,00.asp>
17. Setting Up a Great Home Office
http://www.allbusiness.com/business_advice/articles/9870.html
18. Removable Backup Media: Pros and Cons
<http://data-backup-software-review.toptenreviews.com/removable-backup-media.html>
19. Using Genealogy Software for Record Keeping
<http://genealogy.about.com/library/lessons/blintro3g.htm>