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INPUTTING INFORMATION

Using a Database to Organize Your Information

Gerry Stoner

In setting up your file of data (using scrapbooks, spread sheets, or a database), remember that you need to account for five discrete types of information on each item in your collection: a unique name, digital picture, current location, provenance, and item description.

Objective: *Input data of your collection electronically.*

1. Set up a unique identification for each item. A spreadsheet or the database can do this for you automatically and will keep you from making mistakes and using the same identification for two separate items. In my case, I use a 6-digit number.
2. You will want to scan all historic photographs so that the electronic version can be handled as an original item and the physical picture can retire to a safe place. When you do this, save also a small copy of the picture and copy-and-paste it into the data base.
Take digital pictures of other items (artifacts, books, documents, etc.), if for no other reason than to establish ownership. When you do this, copy-and-paste those pictures into your data base as well.
3. Put an item away where you can easily find it, but also fill in the current status as soon as you establish the record and have placed the identifier photograph. Include the file location, where it has been used, and any other descriptors of the piece.
4. Remember where you have gotten an item, especially before the memory is lost. Fill in the source window and make sure you mention if the item was returned to your source, and you will never have to worry about it again.
5. Fill in a complete description of the item. You can always add information that comes to light later, but you should put down the best information that you have at the time of setting up the entry. In the situation above, the donor was able to fill in most of the names of the people in the picture, but had doubts about one person's identification. Include this question as well as the definite names for future attention. With pictures, you have the benefit of hindsight—use it. Most of these young women were married after the picture was taken and history might remember these women by either their maiden names or their married ones—include both! Include nicknames of people and items in the description, and even names of sources who could give you additional information.



This article is one of several to help you document local history. Other articles will help you convert your interviews, documents, pictures, and artifacts into documentation of your local history that can be shared with your community.

Analyzing Your Own Resources

[Organizing your information](#)

[Organizing the people of your area](#)

[Organizing the documents of your area](#)

[Organizing the pictures of your area](#)

[Organizing the artifacts of your area](#)

Creating Your Own Local History

[Developing documentation from your resources](#)

[Genealogical work](#)

[Validating local history](#)

[Presenting and publishing local history](#)

[Courses and Support](#)

Assignment: Most historical societies close down for the winter, and non-migratory neighbors tend to fight cabin fever by going to the Saturday or Sunday afternoon movies in Hunter, at the Power Authority, or another venue. While these may be fun, I hope you set up this alternative: host a series of workshops using this article as a focus and start to document your own local history.

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