**Will Your Family History Research Die With You?**

What plans have you made to preserve for your family history research after your death? That’s a question. Dealing with life from cradle to grave and beyond, you’d think this would be something family historians, more than most groups, were on top of.

Wrong. Almost half of us have no plan in place. Reasons some say no-one in the family is interested; the researcher had no close relatives; or even simply a case that they had never given it a thought. I guess we don’t like to think of a time when we’re not here!

What will become of my research is something I’ve considered for the past couple of years. I guess I hoped it would all be OK. But, thinking about it, it isn’t fair to let my relatives and executors sort it out. In addition to their grief, they will have enough practical arrangements to deal with. And under those circumstances, there is a possibility it all may be thrown away as the easy option. So, I need to take responsibility and make things easier for them. It’s up to me to decide what I want to happen to my research including if I’m happy for it to be destroyed.

The bottom line is I don’t want it to end up in the bin after I’m gone. And I expect many other family historians, feel the same about their work. That means making plans now.

For some, the emotional and personal aspect of family history research means the ideal solution is to bequeath it to an immediate family member assuming there is someone eager and able to take it on. Although conversely, does this ultimately rob them of the pleasure of research? That’s another dilemma.

**Three key points from the outset.**

1. You need to check that the individual(s) and organisation(s) who you intend leaving your research to are happy to receive it. They simply might not have the space or resources to house it. If it’s an organisation, it may not be suitable for them. And particularly if it is an organisation, it’s only fair to make sure your donation is going to be in a format acceptable to them. All this requires planning. Which leads on to the second point.
2. If possible, do make sure you have properly organised and labelled your research. Make a commitment to review all your research and ensure full source citations are included. Then make sure it’s stored in an organised, logical manner. That means it’s far easier for it to be passed on, and those looking at it in later years can fully understand the sources used, any gaps with them, and the arguments underpinning the conclusions.
3. And finally; Whatever you decide, do formalise it by including it in your will. In addition, do make sure several people know this is your wish. You don’t want it ending up in the skip before the will has been executed.

What are the wider options?

1. Many family history societies have library sections which take donations. Some will have established formal donation policies. It’s worth making contact to see if your research is something they would be interested in, especially if it fits with the area they cover.
2. Check out local history societies too. Again, they may have a library section to accommodate research, or even an active website where they can share information about local families.
3. It may be worth contacting your local Council’s library department, particularly if there is a main local studies library, or if the various branch libraries specialise in local history themes. It is worth bearing in mind, though, the funding pressures facing libraries. Many have downsized or closed in recent years, with reference sections being particularly squeezed.
4. Nationally, organisations such as the Society of Genealogists take donations. More details about donating to the SAG can be found on their website.
5. Finally, there are some practical steps you can take to share and disseminate your work in your lifetime. These include blogging, creating a website, having a family history Facebook Page, uploading a public version of your family tree (e.g. via Ancestry or Genes Reunited), sharing information with relevant one-place or one-name studies, or even writing a family history book and distributing copies to relatives. But some of these may lead to whole new topics…not least around preserving your digital legacy!

Hopefully this has given you some ideas.

Source: Jane Roberts: Yorkshire-Based Professional Family and Local History Researcher

<https://pasttopresentgenealogy.co.uk/2020/01/24/will-your-family-history-research-die-with-you/>