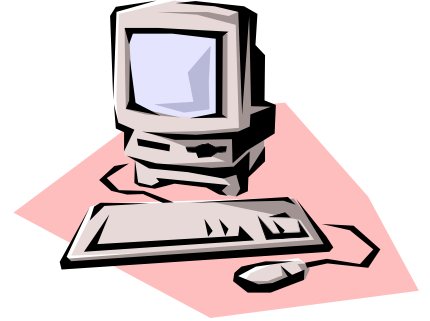


# COMPUTER

# CORNER

## Emptying the Directory

by [mike@blackledge.com](mailto:mike@blackledge.com)



*For 15 years, I have taken pride and personal enjoyment in authoring Computer Corner. Although this may not be the very last column I write, starting in 2020 I will be stepping aside to allow Computer Corner to be created/submitted by committee – if you have an idea for an article you would like to submit, email the Quarterly editor! Meanwhile, as I slip into the sunset, I leave you with some final thoughts.*

**Computer Tech Support Scam:** Most scams work on fear – ours, not theirs – whether it be scary computer pop-up messages [“**Tom Hanks dead!** Click here for the story!”] or phone calls “from the IRS” or “your grandson just got arrested in Mexico.” As a genealogist working from home, you probably won’t get a ransom-ware threat, but you will almost certainly get some pressure sales pitches. Last month, my brother-in-law Richard called me with a tale of woe. When he turned on his computer that morning, a “flashing red Screen of Death” greeted him: flashing lights, black screen with big red letters: “Warning! Warning! Your computer has been taken over by a virus! Call Microsoft immediately!” Very conveniently, the screen provided the Microsoft phone number to call – except, of course, it was not Microsoft – it was some foreign sounding voice that soon ‘took over’ his computer.

Unfortunately, Richard called that “Microsoft” phone number. It did not take long for “tech support” to tell him he could buy a \$200 virus remover, a \$300 version, or they recommended the \$500 deluxe version. Fortunately, when asked for a credit card number, Richard finally hung up. If you search for “Microsoft red screen warning,” part of the answer reads: *“That’s a tech support scam popup. It’s annoying but not potentially “fatal” unless you fall for the scam. Usually you can close down the browser without issue though sometimes you need to close it using Task Manager. Occasionally you may need to do a hard shutdown using the Power button. When you restart the computer do **not** restore your browser if asked to do so.”*

*Please remember:* Microsoft installs **Windows Defender** on all PCs and this will handle viruses as well as any product on the market. However, you overcome the best virus protection when you call “them” – and especially if you allow access to your personal computer. My advice is easy but hard to follow: don’t panic and don’t call phone numbers or click on “click-bait” that is tempting or scaring you.

**2TB or not 2TB:** Perhaps the most useful storage device for your genealogy information is a flash drive [aka thumb drive, jump drive, key chain drive, data stick] – as most library computers have a USB connection, as do most scanners. “Smart TVs” often have at



least one USB port that lets you plug in a hard drive, flash drive, or other USB storage device to view media files on your television.

In August, my neighbor proudly showed me his key ring, which included his ‘two terabyte flash drive.’ I was suitably impressed – two terabytes? Wow! That’s two thousand gigabytes! Only the newest computers come with that much storage, and I have not heard of it in a flash drive. “You can get it on EBay,” Robert said. “Less than \$10 each – but they are shipped from China.” I had to look into this. I searched for 2TB flash drive and yes, found them on Ebay. However, if you search for “aware fake 2TB stick drives” you will find plenty of warnings that these are fakes – no way you get 2TB of storage. I bought some anyway – less than \$5 each on EBay and you at least get 16GB, which to me is still a bargain. Caveat emptor! A ‘real’ 2TB flash drive costs more than \$1000.

**Google is Your Friend** – (sorta): Arthur C. Clarke famously said that sufficiently advanced science is indistinguishable from magic. In our marvelous world of today, one can demonstrate that axiom on any computer, on any day. In particular, the instant information obtained from the Internet is one of the Modern Wonders of the World. As genealogists, we need to learn how to seek out the primary and secondary sources, and to cite them with our research. But just for sheer speed and near-instant gratification, searches (whether you use Google, Microsoft’s Bing, DuckDuckGo, DogPile, or whatever) provide a seemingly miraculous benefit to anyone with wi-fi connection – and we all have wi-fi connection, even if you have to travel on an Albuquerque bus, go downtown, or go to a public library. It is indeed an amazing world that we have inherited. If you have a question, type it in – if a good answer is not there, you may at least find a forum with other folks searching like you.

**Cloud Storage is Your Friend** – (sorta): When I first got into genealogy back in the 60s and 70s, people were very protective of their research. After all, they had invested their good time and painstakingly had sent out all those SASEs (Self-Addressed Stamped Envelopes – you do recall those, don’t you?) and had built their research records shoebox by shoebox, notebook by notebook, index card by index card.

Now the trend is openness – Facebook genealogy groups, Family genealogy blogs, on-line research, and eventually OneWorldTree and similar efforts to build a single, unified pedigree which will identify and merge records containing all data about an individual. More ‘personal’ research is shared every day – both public records and volunteered private research.

Long-time readers of this column recognize that *archive.org* is one of my favorite non-profits. AGS has recognized this with their collection of newspaper indexes and books stored (see our site *abqgen.org*). I have long advocated that each of us obtain our own *archive.org* account and start uploading our photos and data. The benefit to you is that anything so provided will “live in the Cloud forever” – you don’t have to worry about back-up, that’s the specialty of the Cloud. The only drawback is ... yes, you have now shared that resource with the world.

**Free Stuff** – long-time readers will also recognize my fascination with the fact that every day, good-looking Silicon Valley people get up and go to work to create free products for you. Admittedly, there are also some evil, bad-looking folks who are working on scams to relieve you of some of your bank account, but let’s focus on the positive: if you want genealogy software,

access to 1940 Census records, military records databases, a blog for your family, genealogy gifts – it is all there, essentially all free, waiting for you. What a world!

**Turnover Notebook:** the only Computer Corner article that has been published more than once in this column is on the Turnover Notebook – how to create a legacy for those you leave behind, but more importantly, an easy, low-tech method to assist your loved ones with ‘sorting it out’ after you tiptoe off this mortal coil. If you visit *archive.org* and search for Turnover Notebook, this article will appear. Perhaps the most useful advice I can provide.

**20% Project:** In 1948, 3M introduced a unique program that quickly became one of the signature elements of the company’s reputation for innovation. The 15% program, which continues today, allows employees to dedicate up to six hours a week to their own projects, to range beyond the responsibilities of their job, hatch their own ideas and see what can become of them. The invention of Post-it® Brand notes is attributed to this program. Google has “upped” this with their 20% program. In our AGS Special Interest Group on Writing and Publishing, Rosemary has told us that if we really want to write our family histories, we need to carve out an hour a day. That sounded overwhelming to me at the time – but now I realize that is a real key to success in whatever your goal is. AGS has recognized this to an extent with Research Days – a chance to get away from ‘the real world’ and just do your genealogy research. Not quite 20%, but the idea is to carve out that time just for yourself, for what you would really ‘like’ to get accomplished. What would you spend your time on?

**Top Computer Corner Articles:** For the time being, past Computer Corner articles will remain available on our handy AGS web site: *abqgen.org* – click on “**AGS Quarterly**” and you’ll find the articles by issue. Some of “CC’s Greatest Hits” include: Generating Genealogy Gifts; Computer Tips; Digital Research at Zimmerman; Cloud Computing; Free Software; Free Storage; The Magic Button; I Love to Blog!, and Indexing Your Family History.

**Thanks** for your interest and readership over the years – trust me, I’ve learned so much in researching these subjects. Now think about what you can contribute to the AGS member knowledge base. Write up what you’ve learned, or submit a question to Rosemary. My best to you always – *mike@blackledge.com*