



International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

Fédération Internationale des Associations de Bibliothécaires et des Bibliothèques

Internationaler Verband der bibliothekarischen Vereine und Institutionen

Международная Федерация Библиотечных Ассоциаций и Учреждений

Federación Internacional de Asociaciones de Bibliotecarios y Bibliotecas

## About IFLA

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IFLA (The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) is the leading international body representing the interests of library and information services and their users. It is the global voice of the library and information profession.

IFLA provides information specialists throughout the world with a forum for exchanging ideas and promoting international cooperation, research, and development in all fields of library activity and information service. IFLA is one of the means through which libraries, information centres, and information professionals worldwide can formulate their goals, exert their influence as a group, protect their interests, and find solutions to global problems.

IFLA's aims, objectives, and professional programme can only be fulfilled with the co-operation and active involvement of its members and affiliates. Currently, approximately 1,600 associations, institutions and individuals, from widely divergent cultural backgrounds, are working together to further the goals of the Federation and to promote librarianship on a global level. Through its formal membership, IFLA directly or indirectly represents some 500,000 library and information professionals worldwide.

IFLA pursues its aims through a variety of channels, including the publication of a major journal, as well as guidelines, reports and monographs on a wide range of topics. IFLA organizes workshops and seminars around the world to enhance professional practice and increase awareness of the growing importance of libraries in the digital age. All this is done in collaboration with a number of other non-governmental organizations, funding bodies and international agencies such as UNESCO and WIPO. IFLANET, the Federation's website, is a prime source of information about IFLA, its policies and activities: [www.ifla.org](http://www.ifla.org)

Library and information professionals gather annually at the IFLA World Library and Information Congress, held in August each year in cities around the world.

IFLA was founded in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1927 at an international conference of national library directors. IFLA was registered in the Netherlands in 1971. The Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library), the national library of the Netherlands, in The Hague, generously provides the facilities for our headquarters. Regional offices are located in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Pretoria, South Africa; and Singapore.

IFLA Publications 130

# **International Genealogy and Local History**

Edited by

Ruth Hedegaard and Elizabeth Anne Melrose

Papers presented by the

Genealogy and Local History Section

at IFLA General Conferences 2001-2005

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# INTRODUCTION

Melvin Thatcher  
Chairman, GENLOC

## Background

The Genealogy and Local History Section (GENLOC) belongs to the Special Libraries Division of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). The section is charged by IFLA to focus on genealogy, local history, oral history and tradition, and cooperation between archives, libraries, and museums.

GENLOC's mission is to:

*... be a voice for genealogy and local history librarians in the international information community, to facilitate networking among subject specialists and libraries, archives, museums, and related societies and institutions, and to encourage the development of genealogy and local history collections and user services.<sup>1</sup>*

The section's activities include sponsoring open sessions for delivery of professional papers at the annual conferences of IFLA, organizing study tours to institutions of interest to genealogy and local history librarians in the conference city, publishing a semi-annual newsletter, and providing an open listserv<sup>2</sup> for genealogy and local history librarians. In addition, the section maintains a webpage<sup>3</sup> where its strategic plan, publications, minutes of meetings and annual reports, and standing committee member names and addresses are posted.

## Formation

The Social Science Libraries Section agreed to host a discussion group for genealogy and local history librarians during IFLA's annual conference which was held in Copenhagen in 1997. At the annual conference in Amsterdam in the following year, a petition was signed by representatives from fourteen countries supporting formation of the discussion group. After the petition was accepted, the discussion group organized meetings and study tours for participants in the annual conferences of IFLA which

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ifla.org/VII/s37/annual/sp37.htm](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s37/annual/sp37.htm) accessed 31 May 2007

<sup>2</sup> [genloc@infoserv.inist.fr](mailto:genloc@infoserv.inist.fr)

<sup>3</sup> [www.ifla.org/VII/s37/](http://www.ifla.org/VII/s37/)

were held in Bangkok, Jerusalem, and Boston from 1999–2001. At the Boston conference the Special Libraries Section and the Special Libraries Division agreed to support the transformation of the discussion group into a Section as part of the formal structure of IFLA. Approval was granted by the governing bodies of IFLA, and GENLOC was constituted as a section at the annual conference in Glasgow in 2002.

## Conference Papers

The papers collected in this volume present the results of open sessions convened by GENLOC at the annual conferences of IFLA from 2001–2005. A session theme compatible with the general conference theme provided the framework for calls for papers. The number of proposals submitted each year necessitated review and selection by the Section's programme committee. The twenty-five authors, who hail from twelve countries, provide an international view into the topics of concern to genealogy and local history librarians. Some of these papers have been revised since they were presented to provide the author's latest thinking.

The theme of the final meeting of the GENLOC discussion group in 2001 was '*Genealogy and local history librarians making a difference to society in social and cultural development.*' Judith Roach's paper provides an example of how this is being done through the genealogy and local history holdings and services of the Library of Congress, Washington, USA.

Patrick Cadell's paper frames the theme of the 2002 open session, '*Building on the past, investing in the future,*' with ruminations from his lifetime of service to genealogy and local history researchers. The other papers in this section deal with the services and activities of specific institutions. Rhidian Griffiths introduces steps taken by the National Library of Wales to improve access for local and international family historians with Welsh roots. Margareta Bovin describes the role of Swedish Archives Information (SVAR), a unit of the National Archives of Sweden, use of microforms and digital technology to providing libraries to primary sources of information for genealogical research. George MacKenzie discusses the achievements and contributions of the Scottish Archive Network (SCAN) project in providing electronic reference services and digital access to pre-1901 wills and other genealogical source materials. Gu Yan gives an overview of the General Catalogue of Chinese Genealogy project which is creating a catalog of the holdings of archives, libraries, and museums around the world under the leadership of the Shanghai Library. Collectively these papers provide excellent examples of how genealogy and local history services are able to move with technology to support research by improving access to bibliographic records and source documents.

The papers presented in 2003 are focused on the theme '*Co-operation among archives, libraries and museums.*' Ruth Hedegaard discusses co-operation between

archives, libraries, and museums (ALM) in Denmark in creating local and multi-regional, online databases to provide simultaneous access to the holdings of their respective institutions while utilizing existing catalogue and inventory records. Robert Martin delineates how the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) is giving federal grants to promote co-operation between libraries and museums as well as to break down traditional barriers to collaboration between ALMs. Elizabeth Melrose presents the Unnetie Project, which brought together local ALMs and a local history society to provide digital access to images of regional historical interest in North Yorkshire, England. Bozena Rasmussen shares the experience in merging the library, museum, and archive of a small rural community in Norway into a single institution. All of these papers discuss the challenges faced in ALM co-operation and suggest guidelines to pave the way for success.

*'Resources for immigrant history – their origins, lives, and contributions'* was the theme for GENLOC's 2004 open session. George Ryskamp focuses on records generated in European countries during the emigration process and introduces the Immigrant Ancestor Project which is making these records available online. Paul Armony surveys Jewish immigration into Argentina and government and community resources for Jewish genealogical research across the country. Liz McGettigan, David McMenemy, and Alan Poulter discuss co-operation with the Jewish community in East Renfrewshire, Scotland, to create an online portal and CD-ROM in commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day. Belarmina Benitez de Vendrell presents a wide-ranging, annotated bibliography of sources for the study of European immigration to the province of Misiones, Argentina.

The open session papers presented in 2005 addressed the theme of *'Navigating the world of our ancestors.'* The first three papers deal with maps and genealogy. Anita Oser uses data about cemeteries in Jackson County, North Carolina, USA, to illustrate the use of Geographic Information System (GIS) to map the spatial dimension of genealogy. Stephen Young recounts the history and development of the English Jurisdictions Mapping Project that plots the overlapping boundaries of various record keeping entities in selected counties of England – and Peter Korsgaard presents a work in progress, namely the creation of an online digital map reading room in Denmark, paying particular attention to various ways of geocoding, or creating spatial references for places and administrative jurisdictions in terms of their co-ordinates on a map. These papers speak to our natural interest in seeing where things happened and where we are.

The remaining 2005 papers treat other aspects of navigating our ancestral world. Vibeke Kallar and Mícheál Ó hAodha discuss the creation of the Traveller-Roma Access Centre in the library of the University of Limerick and other literacy and access initiatives reach non-traditional users in the Irish Traveller and Roma Gypsies communities of Ireland. Janet Tomkins addresses the challenges faced by Chinese-

Canadian family history researchers and offers suggestions about how libraries can be more inclusive in the provision of genealogical services for minority communities. Ugo Perego and his associates take the reader into the new world of molecular genealogy which uses the results of DNA testing to identify, among other things, the geographic location of our ancestral roots across time. Sanjica Faletar reviews efforts to promote co-operation between cultural heritage institutions, such as ALMs, through the European Union's Cultural Applications: Local Institutions Mediating Electronic Resources Access (CALIMERA) project and a number of initiatives in Croatia. Ragnhild Hutchison presents the Local History World Wide: An International Internet Inventory (LHWW) project and website of the Norwegian Institute of Local History and invites international co-operation in its further development.

The interests, concerns, and vitality of librarians in the field of genealogy and local history are evident in the essays that are collected in this volume. Genealogy and local history librarianship has its historical roots in the research interests and needs of family and community members. Great service has and continues to be rendered by traditional means. And the prospects are bright for wider and easier access to genealogical and historical materials through the development of online services and holdings through the individual and collaborative efforts of archives, libraries, museums and local and national historical and genealogical societies around the world. May the contributions by the authors of these papers be useful in stimulating thought and action in the advancement of genealogy and local history librarianship and services.

# **2001 BOSTON GENEALOGY AND LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARIANS. MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO SOCIETY IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

## **GENEALOGY AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**

Judith Prowse Roach  
Local History and Genealogy Reading Room  
The Library of Congress, Washington, US

### **Abstract**

*This paper summarises the history of the genealogical collections of the Library of Congress in Washington, USA, and describes what these now contain. There is an account of related family history resources in other sections of the Library of Congress; information available both in the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room and through its web-based home page giving access to the Library's online catalogue and to QuestionPoint; and an account of material available in microform and electronic media.*

The Library of Congress<sup>1</sup> has one of the world's premier collections of U.S. and foreign genealogical and local historical publications. The Library's genealogy collection began as early as 1815 when Thomas Jefferson's library was purchased. The Jefferson Library included the *Domesday Book*, Sir William Dugdale's *The Baronetage of England*, and *Peerage of Ireland*.

In August 1935, a 'Reading Room for American Local History and Genealogy' was opened on Deck 47 in the Main Building, today called the Thomas Jefferson Building, 'to provide a more adequate service for those coming to the Library from all parts of the United States to consult our unusually large and important collections of genealogy, including state and local history, and to throw proper safeguards about these collections, large portions of which are irreplaceable.' Today, seventy-one years later, the statement remains accurate, although the Reading Room has changed locations several times to accommodate the growing collections and expansion of the focus of the Room to its present international scope. For example, the reference collection contained 2,500 volumes in 1935; today it has 6,000. Since 1935, the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room has

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<sup>1</sup> [www.loc.gov/index.html](http://www.loc.gov/index.html)

seen relocation to six physical homes, four administrative changes, varying hours of service, and new generations of staff.

The collections are especially strong in North American, British Isles and French, German, and Scandinavian sources. The majority of the genealogies have come as gifts from around the world; the Australians have been particularly generous, and their donations have greatly enhanced British Isles and Australian research at the Library of Congress. These international strengths are further supported and enriched by the Library's incomparable royalty, nobility, and heraldry collection, making it one of a few libraries in America that offers such comprehensive collections.

In addition to the national and international genealogy and local history collections at the Library of Congress, other related material of great significance to these fields is found in the areas of archival resources, biography, church history, city directories, folklore, geography, and history. Important genealogical resources are also found in special collections of manuscripts, maps and atlases, microforms, newspapers, photographs, and rare books housed in various custodial divisions of the Library.

Fortunately, the Library has a number of outstanding tools to help access these collections. *The Library of Congress: A Guide to Genealogical and Historical Research* by James Neagles (Salt Lake City, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 1990) is a comprehensive handbook for the Library's genealogical collections and inventories the Library's vast city directories collection.

Additionally, the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room's homepage<sup>2</sup> provides general information about the reading room (hours; location; requirements for reader registration; information about tours; descriptions of the collections; details for presenting gift books to the Library; the full-text of the reading room's bibliographies and guides; and links to other Internet sources on local history and genealogy). Equally important, both the Library's and the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room's homepages provide access to the Library's online catalog and to QuestionPoint, the Library's electronic reference question tool. To search for citations to genealogies using the Library's online catalog, use the search term 'Family' after the name of the family, e.g. Roach Family. The Library has linked catalog records to digital table of contents, indexes, and other parts of the bibliographic record for many of our 50,000 genealogies. More than 300 local histories have been digitized and are accessible on the Library's American Memory site<sup>3</sup> through *California as I Saw It: First-Person Narratives of California's Early Years, 1849–1900*; *Pioneering the Upper Midwest: Books from Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, ca. 1820–1910*; and *The Capital and the Bay: Narrative of Washington and the Chesapeake Bay Region, ca. 1600–1925*.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/](http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/)

<sup>3</sup> [memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html)

Remote access is also provided by the interlibrary loan of material in microform for which the Library holds the master negative. Since the Library has microfilmed all of its holdings in class CS71 (U.S. genealogy) published from 1876 to 1900, a significant part of the genealogical collection has become available through interlibrary loan for use in libraries around the country. To identify genealogy titles on microfilm consult *Genealogies Cataloged by the Library of Congress Since 1986: With a List of Established Forms of Family Names and a List of Genealogies Converted to Microfilm Since 1983* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1991). The Library of Congress does not permit its books on genealogy, heraldry, and U.S. local history to circulate on interlibrary loan. The Library's Photoduplication Service can supply photocopies of items located in the Library's collection if there are no copyright restrictions.

The Local History and Genealogy Reading Room (LH&G), a small, specialized reading room, answers questions about heraldry, royalty and nobility, biography, naval and maritime history, American history, as well as genealogy and local history. Because many genealogies are self-published and have been given to the Library for many generations from around the world, the Library has more than 50,000 genealogies and more than 100,000 local histories. A 'Gifts' information sheet<sup>4</sup> designed to assist authors in donating their family histories to the Library is available by mail and from the Local History and Genealogy Reading Room homepage. The Library acquires published material in a variety of ways. In addition to gifts, the Library of Congress relies heavily on copyright deposits for additions to its collections. If it is not possible to acquire a publication through donation or copyright, the Library makes every effort to purchase a copy. While the Library's collections are outstanding, every published genealogy will not be found here. To identify those available elsewhere, book catalogs and online tools, including the Internet, are used.

The Local History and Genealogy Reading Room, with a staff of ten, is located on the Ground Floor of the Jefferson Building, LJ G-42; it offers specialized card catalogs that index genealogy, heraldry, and local history in the collections. An inventory of the Library's extensive collection of city directories is maintained at the Reference Desk. Primary Source Microfilms's *City Directories of the United States*, in the Microform Reading Room, is a microform collection of directories from selected cities and towns, dating from the colonial period to as recently as 1960. See *U.S. City Directories on Microfilm in the Microform Reading Room*<sup>5</sup> for a list of cities and towns. These microforms are supplemented by the Library's extensive collection of unclassified city directories in paper.

The Local History and Genealogy Reading Room also offers public Internet terminals and subscription databases. Of special interest are *Ancestry Library*

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<sup>4</sup> [www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/gifts.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/gifts.html)

<sup>5</sup> [www.loc.gov/rr/microform/uscity/](http://www.loc.gov/rr/microform/uscity/)

*Edition* and *Heritage Quest Online* that offer digital images of the U.S. Federal census. Further highlights of the former are: an Immigration Collection that includes the New York Passenger Lists for 1820–1891; the *American Genealogical-Biographical Index*; the Civil War Databases including the *Civil War Pension Index* and *Civil War Service Records*; the *Social Security Death Index*; and the Massachusetts Town Vital Records Collection. In addition to the digital images of the U.S. Federal census, *HeritageQuest* includes more than 25,000 family and local histories in full image, the *Periodical Source Index*, a comprehensive subject index to more than 6,500 genealogy and local history periodicals, the *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application Files* and the *Freedman's Bank Records*. Much of this material is in the Library's collection.

Another important electronic resource is *ProQuest Historical Newspapers* which offers full text and full image articles from the *Atlanta Constitution*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Chicago Defender*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post* dating back to their first issue. For a complete list of the Library's electronic resources for genealogy and local history research look under History, Genealogy & Archives, which is one of the categories found on the Electronic Resources webpage.<sup>6</sup> While the Library is rich in collections of manuscripts, microfilms, newspapers, photographs, maps, and published material, it is not an archive or repository for unpublished or primary source county, state, or church records. Researchers seeking county records will need to visit the courthouse or a library in the county of interest, the state archives, the Family History Library in Salt Lake City or one of its Family History Centers, all of which might have either the original county records or microform copies. Libraries, archives, and genealogical and historical societies at the national, state, and local levels are all vital resources in this complex puzzle of genealogical research.

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<sup>6</sup> Internet Subscription Sources: [www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/internet.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/internet.html)

Other Internet Sources on Local History and Genealogy:

[www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/other.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/genealogy/other.html)

See also:

Hispanic Reading Room: [www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/](http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/) Asian Reading Room: [www.loc.gov/rr/asian/](http://www.loc.gov/rr/asian/)

African and Middle Eastern Reading Room: [www.loc.gov/rr/amed/](http://www.loc.gov/rr/amed/)



**NOTE**

This paper was presented at IFLA Boston 2001 and updated by the author in November 2006.

All websites were active 2007.



# **2002 GLASGOW BUILDING ON THE PAST, INVESTING IN THE FUTURE.**

## **BUILDING ON THE PAST, INVESTING IN THE FUTURE THROUGH GENEALOGY AND LOCAL HISTORY SERVICES**

Patrick Cadell  
Edinburgh, Scotland

### **Abstract**

*This is a discussion of the changes and advances in genealogical research from a time when some archivists treated the public with suspicion and genealogists had less background historical detail about their ancestors than they are now able to access. The Scottish Archive Network (SCAN) is an example of what modern technology can supply with its scans of primary genealogical material, wills and testaments in Scotland up to 1875. Advances in Information Technology have simplified the scrutiny of the past for family historians. These improvements should also ensure a more qualitative approach to research, and allow the work of scholars to be made available to others.*

In the matter of genealogy and the study of family history, it is remarkable what advances have been made in recent times and certainly over the three or four decades during which I have been involved. I recall two quite separate incidents, both from the 1970s, and both from my own professional experience. They perhaps demonstrate both the work that was needed for successful genealogical research, and the standard of proof that people were prepared to find acceptable at that time.

One Saturday morning an elderly American lady came into the manuscripts reading room of the National Library of Scotland, and said that she was descended from the family of Cumming of Presley which had emigrated to America at about the time of the second Jacobite rising. She was quite clear about this, and she had all the proofs necessary. What she wanted to be able to show was that the Cummings of Presley were descended from the Cummings of Altyre, and thus from the head of the clan. She had discovered that the Cumming papers were in the Library and she was determined to see what could be found. On that day, and on many others, with the calendar of the papers and the original documents, she laboured through some very complicated 17<sup>th</sup> century deeds, but eventually she came across, under the unpromising title of a '*bond of caution*', exactly what she wanted.

One of the lairds of Altyre of the 1670s was a very wild young man, and in order to save him from prison or perhaps from the gallows, members of his extended family came together to form an agreement that they would guarantee his good behaviour. All these people, who included the Cumming of Presley of the day, proclaimed their loyalty to the Cummings of Altyre *'from whom we are all descended'*. The American lady had the proof she wanted even if it still lacked some precise details, and was absolutely delighted. But she had had to work long and hard for the information she needed.

My second incident relates to a man who wished to prove his descent from someone who had flourished in the 1770s and 1780s. The proof of this descent did not seem very good, to me anyway. However as if to clinch the argument, he brought out a photograph of a portrait of this gentleman, and asked me if I did not think there was a strong family resemblance between him and his supposed ancestor. As I still must have seemed less than convinced, he produced a further photograph of himself wearing just such a bobwig as was being worn by the man in the picture. I need hardly say that our conversation ended inconclusively, but as it was conducted in an open search room well within the hearing of other researchers, I noted the handkerchiefs that were being put to mouths, the splutterings of mirth and the heaving shoulders. That particular genealogist's standard of proof was not high.

The point I wish to make is that genealogical research is now in many areas a lot easier than it used to be, but that it is also a lot more rigorous. It is also, I rather suspect, a lot more interesting. I shall return to the first two of these; let us look at the interest of genealogy.

There is no doubt that at one time what was considered a sufficient achievement in itself was the linking of one person – usually male – with his father, and so on back with a few dates and places but often little else, in the faint hope of finding a royal or at least a noble ancestor. A Danish archivist once wondered aloud in my hearing why it was that everyone seemed to want to prove how they had come down in the world. Even fully written up family histories were exceptional if they made any effort to deal with anything beyond military or political achievements. Female members of the family, however influential, were simply cardboard cutouts. Agricultural, industrial or social activities are little mentioned before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and then only grudgingly. As for musical or artistic skills – one thinks of the Burnetts of Leys, the Maules of Panmure, the Roses of Kilravock or the Clerks of Penicuik – you will have a task to find much reference to this aspect of their characters in the histories of those families, though evidence of their skill is readily available. As for the skeleton that lurks somewhere in every family's cupboard, it is simply overlooked.

Now, I believe, we are beginning to look for more rounded characters in our genealogies. The family tree needs a bit of foliage on its bare branches, and we are

no longer satisfied with a simple relationship and a date. We realise that people who emerge from old documents, in difficult language and script, nevertheless had feelings, interests, worries and preoccupations which are not absolutely different from our own.

I lay some emphasis upon this because I think it is something which has brought what one might call 'respectability' to genealogy. There are still, I regret to say, a few archivists who do not like dealing with genealogists, and who consider that family history is not true research. I like to think that they are a dying breed. I also like to think that many people interested in family history arrive in a library or archive with very much more information at their disposal than would have formerly been the case, and are therefore ready to move on to more interesting research – to an examination of what lies behind the life events of which the bare record tells us little.

In 1789, William Malcolm was condemned to be transported to Australia for stealing a horse, but why did the judge at the trial find it necessary to pay for him to have a complete new set of clothing before he went? Agnes Murray Kynynmound died in 1778. How do we know so much about the development of her breast cancer? Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, 7<sup>th</sup> baronet, died young, but is always thought to have married and had a son. Why is there not a single scrap of paper in the family archive for the period of eighteen months or so covering the marriage, the birth and Sir William's death?

These are matters which a true family historian would wish to know about, and because so much basic information is so much more readily available now than it was in the 1970s, those interested in family research have the time and the opportunity to extend their studies. Sometimes this will be into the life and work of an individual; sometimes into that of the locality in which the family flourished. What I find remarkable is the quality of the research being done. I do not speak here of the professional researchers and record agents whose knowledge and efficiency never cease to astonish me. I speak of the 'ordinary' family historian, if such a person exists, who wants more information, certainly, but who can now look for it on the basis of greater knowledge, and of a better understanding of what the records will offer and of how to make best use of them.

It is nevertheless a feature of the last thirty years that record offices receive a much higher percentage of first time users. In June 1998, the Public Record Office conducted a survey of its readers. It showed that 22% were visiting, not just the PRO, but any record office for the first time. These first-time readers are in a very large majority people who are interested in family or local history. One of the reasons why family historians take up such a disproportionate amount of the archivist's time, and perhaps why some archivists so dislike them, is just that. They are more demanding because their needs are greater. Their perfectly reasonable

questions keep the searchroom archivists from other tasks. But this very fact has encouraged archive services, and indeed those such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS Church) with a particular interest in the matter – and in the case of the Scottish Archive Network both together – to move into making basic genealogical material available in more easily accessible ways.

I suppose the earliest examples of this in this country were the publication by the Scottish Record Society of lists of burials, testaments, apprentices etc. along with the lists of professional people, advocates, writers and of course ministers of the Church of Scotland. The involvement of the LDS Church made possible the microfilming of the Old Parochial Registers, and subsequently their indexing, and for the first time brought the search of genealogical records within the scope of modern technology. I should admit at once that this process was not viewed without some suspicion when it first began. It was justified as a necessary conservation measure, but of course it also meant that when, considerably later, technology permitted, there were several ways in which the information in the Old Parochial Registers could be managed and manipulated. This gave the researcher as much information as he or she could obtain from the registers without having to search in volume after volume, possibly in vain, for people who moved from one place to another, or for whom no record survives.

This type of access is now being dramatically extended by the Scottish Archive Network (SCAN).<sup>1</sup> Scanning the wills and testaments of Scottish men and women up to 1875 (the records most heavily used for genealogical purposes after the Old Parochial Registers and the census records), and provision of networked access to the catalogues of the archive repositories in Scotland are further examples of what new technology can offer. They will allow the researcher to do more and more work at home, or at least off site, before he or she has to consult those troublesome original documents. I mention SCAN to make the point that much is being done to help the genealogist – and let us admit it – to help the archivist, so that when the family historian does arrive in the search room his or her visit will be of real value.

If all these developments make genealogical research easier, they also make it more rigorous. At least I would like to think so. Though there will always be points that are not absolutely clear, and others that are open to discussion, there is, on the whole, little use in arguing with the official record. Its compilers had no particular axe to grind, and I have only once come across an official document of the last two or three centuries which had clearly been tampered with. By offering a higher standard of accuracy in the traditional areas of genealogy, is it not reasonable to hope that higher standards will be maintained elsewhere?

The publication of *Roots* was groundbreaking in a number of ways. Perhaps the most obvious was that the author, as an American of African descent, wanted to find

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<sup>1</sup> [www.scan.org.uk/](http://www.scan.org.uk/)

out where he came from and who his ancestors had been, and in particular, both in the title he chose and in the avowed aim of the book, he stated his purpose of needing to find a fixed point in the past of his own ancestors. Although the ancestors of most of the people in this room have not been subjected to enormous social or political upheaval, there are probably few who live where they were born. Most Scotsmen if pressed will admit that a few generations back their forebears arrived from the Highlands, Ireland, England, the continent of Europe or even further away. But this is the generation, perhaps more than any other, which has seen social movement. People go from one side of the world to the other in search of work, and people settle in places to which they have no attachment beyond that of employment. As a consequence people naturally wish to have a better understanding of the family traits, the physical characteristics, and the instinctive loyalties with which they are blessed or cursed. The remarkable novel *No Great Mischief* by Alistair MacLeod is all about this personal heritage, which can be difficult to understand, but which it is impossible to escape. There is in fact an ever increasing demand to meet what for many people has become a psychological need – the need to find a few fixed points in a world of constant change. The locality in which you have settled offers one fixed point, but so does your family. You may not like your family; you may not consider your ancestors particularly estimable; but they are unalterably yours.

The future of genealogy itself, I suspect, is more of the same. Advances in IT and scanning technology suggest ways in which classes of records might be made available electronically. In Scotland, some of the great Registers – Deeds and Sasines in particular – might perhaps be given the same treatment as the wills. It is interesting that this idea was considered when SCAN was being set up, but was rejected as being altogether beyond what it was reasonable to undertake with the technology of the time – just a few short years ago. Now it is a definite option. Access to existing catalogues and indexes will little by little become easier. And just as advances are taking place in IT technology, so advances are taking place in popular understanding of, and skill with, IT. It is perfectly reasonable now to ask a prospective researcher what internet investigation he or she has made before coming to a record office, and it is to be hoped that the huge efforts made by archives and libraries to make their holdings more user friendly will be to everyone's benefit.

However there are problems associated with all of this which ought not to be underestimated. In a traditional library or archive search room there was a professional person who could explain and evaluate the records or books being used, and who could assess them properly in relation to other records which might be available. There was thus perhaps less danger of giving greater value to the material being consulted than the material would really bear. The fact, for example, that one of those marvellous town directories, which are so common for the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

affirms that your ancestor was the best drawer of teeth for miles around does not indicate either that the information is true, or that he practised in a particular place for longer than the time necessary to get his name into the directory.

The besetting virtue of the genealogist is optimism. Hope is always there and links are made which the actual evidence will not support. There was an Alexander Edward, known as a mathematician and musician; another was minister of Kemback in Fife; another was a garden designer of more than passing importance. Alexander Edward is also a rather uncommon name. The assumption that these people are one and the same – correct as it happens – is one which one might be tempted to take for granted. But I know from my own family that many people have assumed that Thomas Cadell, father and son, successful publishers in London in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, must of course have been related to the equally successful Robert Cadell who published the works of Sir Walter Scott. In fact they are completely unrelated, though they operated at the same time in a small profession, and share an unusual name of Celtic origin. One lot comes from Wales, the other from Scotland.

I make these points because, with an increasing use of IT, there will be less need, and possibly less opportunity, for the genealogist to interface with that best of all finding aids, the archivist or librarian behind the desk. We have to be careful to see that the information available through the computer is properly described, not just as to its content, but as to its value. Frankly I have no suggestions as to how this should best be done, though I know that the many courses on genealogy run by universities, libraries, archives and evening schools take the matter very seriously. The difficulty is more to do with the extent to which all potential genealogists are prepared – not just in terms of the information available to them electronically, but in terms of the value of that information – for the work they hope to do.

There are other difficulties. For many years it was assumed that one of the main functions of an archive service, particularly a national one, was to publish the records it held. This could be done in the form of calendars of documents – into which of course the archivist's own value judgements intruded – or by printing them in full, and in both cases providing an index. Indeed, publishing the records of Scotland was one of the main tasks of the National Archives of Scotland as set out in the various reports produced in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of the great series of state papers, only that of parliament has been published in what might pass for its entirety. If anyone fancies tackling the transcription of the many series of which there are incomplete published versions, I'm sure no one would stand in his or her way. The great advantage of the publication process was that it got over the difficulties of palaeography, if not necessarily those of language, and was much appreciated by researchers of all sorts. Indeed, although the cost of doing so had become prohibitive, and the demand seemed limited, I was still under some pressure



in the early 1990s as Keeper of the Records of Scotland to continue that kind of activity.

Scanning it seems to me is the modern way of doing the same thing. Its advantages of speed and accessibility are obvious. However it has at least two drawbacks: it can only scan what it sees – that is the original text – and there is as yet no reliable means of indexing original documents automatically. This task has to be undertaken by teams of dedicated people as part of the scanning process – as the LDS Church has shown. In the case of material already printed, the problems of reading and indexing are perhaps less significant, but not those of choosing what to make available, and of course the wider the range of the material brought into an electronic system, the less actual research value it is likely to have, but the more expensive it will be to produce in the first place, to maintain, to make available and to preserve.

I do believe that these are problems which will resolve themselves as technology advances. I envisage, at some point in the future, that genealogists will be able to do the bulk of their work at home, that they will be able to order copies of documents electronically, and that their direct use of our archives and libraries will fall. In some ways I would regret this, but the objectives of making genealogical research easier, and lightening the genealogical load on the librarian and archivist, obviously tend in this direction. Perhaps we shall one day begin to miss all those family historians. We shall certainly be ignorant of what work is being done on material of which we hold the originals. Separating access to documents from the source of those documents removes a level, not so much of control, but of knowledge on the part of the repository of what research is in progress. Even now, researchers are not as careful as they should be – in their own interests as well as those of libraries and archives – to say what they are working on. When, in future, for example, someone can sit at his or her desk in New Zealand and carry out, very effectively, research which would once have involved a lengthy and expensive stay in Scotland, this situation will simply become worse. It is a brave and exciting new genealogical world, but not altogether without its hazards.

So we are making, and will continue to make, the best use possible of the wonders of modern technology. I would like to come back to the one or two downsides that there are to the use of IT in historical research. While one can generally assume the accuracy of what appears on screen, the same is by no means true of its completeness. One may get the truth and nothing but the truth, but not necessarily the whole truth. While the SCAN wills project does indeed aim at being exhaustive, and in any case is involved with the processing of a well defined series of records, the same is far from true of networked catalogues. Can we be sure that the description of a family archive contains all the information necessary to allow us to assess the value of it – or otherwise – to our research? The fact that there is a computer catalogue in an archive service does not mean that everything is in that

catalogue or indeed that the original catalogues on which the computer access is based are of even quality. Even with modern attempts to create cataloguing standards, ISAD(G)<sup>2</sup> for example, archival description remains highly subjective. What may take my fancy in a collection of papers, and what I would therefore wish to mention in a catalogue description, may not be what you would find interesting, and vice versa. But the temptation to assume that what appears on screen is complete is a very powerful one. It allows us to assume that we have done all that it is reasonable to do. At the same time it can excuse us from the tiresome chore of checking as to whether some archive at the other end of the country has material that might perhaps be relevant. Laziness is in fact a great motivator.

There is however something worse. This comes in two forms. There is beginning to be a break down in the distinction between archives and information. Librarians, I suspect, have been dealing with this for ages – the phenomenon of expecting repositories of books or documents to be able to offer instant replies to questions on matters of fact, even on matters of easily ascertainable fact. It is almost as though people were beginning to lose any understanding of where information comes from, rather like children who say that milk comes from a carton or from the supermarket, and are unable to relate it to a cow. The archives of the European Commission, for example, suffer from this in a big way. They are repeatedly being asked for basic information about the constitution and history of the European Union which is perfectly accessible on websites and in easily available reference books.

The second problem relates to the use of email for research purposes. Again, because people are so accustomed to working on screen, they always assume that on the one hand others do the same, and on the other, that those others can work at their rhythm. There is a tendency to believe that if you send off an email message you should get a response almost at once. But of course that is not necessarily so. The email may demand just as much time for a proper reply as did a traditional letter, but because it is easier to send, more are sent. Archives are beginning to develop defence mechanisms against this, which mainly boil down to the very traditional refusal to do someone else's research. It is one thing to say what an archive holds, to suggest that certain collections would possibly interest the researcher, and to describe the facilities available at the record office. It is another to say that a particular collection does not relate to a researcher's area of work, or that there is reference to a particular person or event in a bulky series of papers. In addition, because emails are so easy to send out, they may for example be sent out indiscriminately to all the major archive services of the country. Many of them will be irrelevant, but will still add to the workload of the duty archivist.

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<sup>2</sup> ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description.  
see: [www.ica.org/biblio/isad\\_g\\_2e.pdf](http://www.ica.org/biblio/isad_g_2e.pdf)  
and: [www.paradigm.ac.uk/workbook/cataloguing/isadg2.html](http://www.paradigm.ac.uk/workbook/cataloguing/isadg2.html)

I do not associate genealogists in particular with this, but it is a trend which has developed over the last few years. It was certainly very apparent in the National Archives of Scotland before I left at the end of 2000, and genealogists are not altogether innocent.

These are caveats which need certainly to be borne in mind, but I think it is fair to say that the old reservations which archivists tended to have about genealogists and local historians have almost disappeared. The quality of research is improving; the means of carrying out that research are better and are improving all the time. What is pleasing, as I have already pointed out, is that the motives which lie behind the demands for access by the genealogist and bodies with similar interests on the one hand, and those which lie behind the need for archivists to make their holdings more readily accessible, may be different, but they are equally powerful, and are pushing us all in the same direction. I have great expectations of genealogical research, and the fact that it has found this important slot at IFLA's conference shows perhaps that I am not alone. Finally may I add a plea? We are told – especially by those bodies which are responsible for funding us, and also occasionally by those archivists who do not consider family history to be 'proper' research – that genealogists are doing no more than enjoying their leisure. It follows from this, does it not, that what they are doing is not serious, and that in any case they should pay for the privilege of doing it. I do not think it is for anyone to question a researcher's motives. Just because I am studying people rather than things, does not make the difference between enjoying or not enjoying the work of research. I imagine that the academic researcher gets just as much pleasure from his or her work as does the genealogist. If not, he or she should be in a different job.

However, the fact that the research process is pleasurable does not, it seems to me, remove from the researcher the obligation to make the results of that research available to a wider public. I rather suspect that many family historians have piles of notes at the back of some drawer which have great potential interest, and which, if they can be used, would certainly save others from going through the same documents. We all know of examples in Scotland of our debt to researchers who looked at and then transcribed, or at least described, documents which are now lost. Without the work of the antiquaries of the late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century – the Earl of Haddington, and Balfour of Denmilne, in this country; Sir William Dugdale, John Selden in England and many, many others – our knowledge of earlier periods would be much diminished.

We should not underestimate the value of what we do, and we should make sure that it is preserved. Just because we do it now does not somehow devalue it by comparison with other work, which has gone before. Haddington and Balfour and those other early researchers were not always right, but their work has in many cases provided a foundation on which others have been able to build. Research is an

isolated activity, but its foundations are the work of others, and its results should be available to others. What may seem to you to be a comparatively modest investigation may lead on to other things for other people.

# WALES TO THE WORLD, THE WORLD TO WALES

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## Abstract

*The National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth is by far the largest centre for genealogical research in Wales. Its collections include many family history sources such as parish registers and pre-1858 wills along with local newspapers. Unusually for a national library, it also has extensive collections of family and estate archives, photographs and maps which can assist the genealogist. In recent years the Library has upgraded the facilities it has available for family history and has published a free guide to sources. It has also had considerable success in attracting more visitors and users from all parts of the world, many of whom are the descendants of Welsh emigrants.*

It is a commonplace of life in Wales that Welsh people all know each other. More than that, when Welsh people meet, the first thing they do is to establish their respective places of origin and then go on to determine which friends and acquaintances they may have in common, and even whether they are related to one another. The Welsh mind is still tribal, and it is not unusual, particularly in Welsh-speaking Wales, to know one's second cousins as close relatives. It is, therefore, appropriate that the National Library of Wales should be represented at this meeting of the new Genealogy and Local History Section, because, as I hope to show, its contribution to the study of genealogy and local history is already significant and likely to be more so in time.

The National Library of Wales was founded in 1907, the outcome of a long struggle within Wales for national recognition and the foundation of national institutions. The vision of its founding fathers was a broad and imaginative one, and as a result the Library is unusual, if not unique, in the wide range of its collection formats. According to its royal charter of foundation, dated 19 March 1907, the Library is required to collect documentary material of all kinds relating to Wales and the Welsh, including printed and manuscript material, archival documents, portraiture and photographs; a supplementary charter of 1978 extended this broad remit to include audio-visual material, which in recent years has been widened to include sound, broadcast, film and moving image material. As a result, visitors to the Library at Aberystwyth in west Wales (always remember that Aberystwyth, not