

Simplified Publishing of Genealogy Research for Distribution to the Family

By Norma O'Toole

Many of us would like to distribute to the family the information that we have gathered over the years in a convenient, easy-to-read format. Through trial and error, I found a method that worked for me and it may help others produce their own family books.

I have written family history books on my own family and that of my husband, and have also completed a book to honour my uncle's service in the Second World War. For my own family history book, rather than base the book on a distant ancestor, and work forward, I chose to name the book "Family History of (my mother.) With this method, I was able to write about all of the families that were connected to her including the ancestors of both of her parents, and those of her husband. (My father.)

I used Family Tree Maker to compile the data, but I produced my book in my word processing software, Microsoft Word, with the assistance of Family Tree Maker. I set up separate chapters in the MS Word version of the book for each surname with the use of headers and footers; section breaks for each new chapter etc. If you are not familiar with advanced formatting of documents, it can be quickly learned with the assistance of the "help" menu in your software.

Due to the problems with identity theft these days, details of living persons such as full date of birth should be removed for privacy if the book is to be donated to an archive, a museum, or a family history society. In FTM 2014 I "Privatized" the FTM file (File > Privatize) and saved it to a new file name. Then I selected "Publish" and "Genealogy Report and "Descendant Report" for the earliest ancestor in each family group and chose the number of generations that would enable me to extract data for each generation including the youngest present day family member. I selected "Generate Report", "Items to Include", and then "Save Report", "Share", "Export to RTF", and "Save As" a new title in my genealogy subject file for that surname. I then pasted each report into a separate draft document. The text was then pasted into the chapter in the MS Word book that was created for that family name. Other genealogy programs will have similar reports.

I then fine-tuned the book by inserting scanned copies of photographs; birth, marriage, and death certificates; census returns; maps and any other documents that may be of interest to the reader.

If you are not comfortable with inserting text boxes and wrapping text, a simple way to add photographs, scanned documents and certificates etc. is through the use of tables. At the point in the book where you would like to add a photograph and a caption, insert a table with two columns and one row. Place your cursor in one column and select "insert photograph". Select the photo from the electronic photos in your files. To adjust the size, click on the photo to select it and drag one of the corners until it fits the desired space on the page. Type the caption or background information in the other column. Larger documents may be placed in a one-column table with two rows so that the caption appears below the item. To remove the border of the table, select "format" "borders and shading" and choose "none".

I went through the narrative and cleaned up the text by removing some of the unwanted FTM terminology. I then incorporated the information from these additional points into the text. The numbering system that was imported from the family tree software was retained as a handy reference to relationships within families.

I had researched the passenger lists and had identified the names of the ships on which my relatives had travelled to Canada. I included construction details; sailing histories; and where possible, photographs of the ships in the book. My mother was just thrilled to see a picture of the Steamship MEGANTIC that she had sailed on to Canada at age six in 1919. At the age of 90, she still remembered seeing the icebergs! I also enlivened the family history by providing information about the life, times, and living conditions of earlier eras; and the geographical features of the areas from which my ancestors had emigrated.

Since the book is for restricted distribution and is not sold for profit, it was possible to include some short excerpts of copyright material. This material is properly referenced for sources.

Publishing Techniques

Following my research trip to the UK with a draft copy of the book, I produced the final version in time for my Mother's 90th birthday. I just saved the book in PDF format and sent it to Staples via email for printing.

I had researched all of the families on both my Mother's and Father's side. I had now produced a book composed of 159 pages in seven chapters. Rather than have 25 copies of the full book, the printers were able to break down the book into chapters and to custom print it to my order. My Mother, sister, nieces, and nephews etc. who were connected to both sides of the family received the full book. My uncle received a copy without my father's information. Abbreviated copies containing only the chapters of interest were printed for my Mother's cousins and for the relatives in Scotland, sparing them from having to read about families to whom they are not connected.

I also saved money by having the book printed in black and white on bright white paper. The grayscale photographs were reproduced with amazing clarity. To add interest, I included at the back of the book a ten-page family photo album with coloured pictures on high quality back-to-back photo paper that I had printed with my own printer. These pages were given to the publishing company to incorporate into the book.

The table of contents was set up with the names of the various chapters, and the family groups that they contained, as well as a column that showed the relationship of each family to my Mother. Although my software will produce an alphabetical index, I chose not to perform this time-consuming task for this version of the book. I chose cerlex binding for the project so that I could send updates to be incorporated into the book as new family information was either contributed by holders of the book, or uncovered through further research.

I hope that these hints may help you in disseminating your research to your families.