

## OGS 2012 Report

...What's happened in genealogy in the past year and what does it mean for OGS?

We combined *Ohio Records & Pioneer Families* and the *Ohio Civil War Genealogy Journal* into our membership publication, the *Ohio Genealogical Society Quarterly*. We had been publishing three separate journals and some very good material was read by as few as 600 people. Now all 5600 OGS members get the benefit of all articles and the expertise of those authors. It just made sense to make the change.

We also scanned 54 years of back issues of all our past publications including the news magazine, *Ohio Genealogy News*, and placed these on the OGS web site for our members, fully searchable.

Although digitization is great, have you ever gone to your library shelf and pulled off each title one by one to see what is now online? I have done a test run on the nearly 50,000 books in the Samuel D. Isaly Library and the books digitized in our collection are well under 5%. Genealogical societies with libraries are still vastly important.

OGS also has started an electronic option for receiving your publications. Members get an email pointing to the new issue on the OGS web site. This saves paper, shelf space, and money. But most of us still want the hard copy option. I recently attended a meeting of an Ohio historians' group that is all electronic, and their outgoing President made the comment that 35% of their subscribers are not even clicking on the link to open the journal that they pay for! We don't know how many people our print journal reaches beyond our membership, but one can be certain that it is passed around and sits in libraries for decades for all to view before making its way to the recycling bin.

What this group seems to recognize is that the most important aspect of this hobby is the people, the OGS members themselves. We still are able to get well over 500 attendees at a weekend educational sabbatical like this one. Webinars are great but isn't it wonderful to interact in person with a nationally-known instructor and your 500 closest friends?

But at the same time, we at OGS are reaching new generations through the use of blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. Genealogical research has indeed changed so much. This year, FamilySearch added Ohio county probate records, births, and naturalizations to the Ohio marriage, tax, and death record image databases already online. Yet I cannot count the number of library patrons who say they use FamilySearch but haven't gone beyond the search box. We genealogists are certainly needed to point new researchers in the right direction.

When I explored the changes to the new web interface introduced by FamilySearch this past week, I started typing my ancestors into their fan chart and soon had an expansive family tree but was wondering where all these people I connected to got their information? Now I am forced to put my name out there making corrections complete with source extractions and citations to show who is indeed correct. Although Ancestry.com has had 200 incorrect (and different) versions of my family history for years, I finally realized that it is our duty to speak out and tell our own story. We have been educated in the best genealogical society in the nation and must in turn educate others who haven't yet found a group beyond their home computer.

All genealogy is like that today, a not always balanced mixture of the digital world and real world people. This past summer, I was trimming shrubbery in my local cemetery as a cemetery board member, and was completely surprised by one of my OGS chapter buddies who was taking digital pictures of tombstones. I asked him what he was doing up in my neighborhood. He said that all the stones in Ashland County had now been photographed and were on Find-a-Grave.com and he had started to travel to the neighboring counties. This is exactly why genealogical societies are important. We are the ones doing the work to make the digital world possible.

It is these folks in genealogical societies that bring a sense of community to our hobby. Preparing for this OGS conference, I got a call from a non-member asking about hotel space. I took poor notes and when the caller's email bounced, I discovered that I didn't even have a name let alone a location or phone number. The voice on the other end of the phone had sounded African-American to me, so I emailed our African American genealogy round table. They didn't recognize the email address but soon had networked my problem to like groups around the US and quickly found the caller out in Illinois.

Through that imperfect mixture of the technological world and those real world people out there -- that extended family or network of genealogists, societies like ours have a great opportunity to educate the whole world and benefit by all the wonderful things that it brings back to us in return. This year's conference theme, "Expanding Your Ancestry Through Technology," could not be more appropriate, but always remember that it is the people using that technology that are important.

Tom Neel, Library Director