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November 14, 2008

Family History Expo, Mesa, Arizona

The Future of our Past. Leveraging Todays Technology to Capture Yesterdays Memories.

Many things in life seems to take the stage, advance, retrograde, and then recycle. Clothes styles are often just imitations of the past. It seems the youth are always copying the fashions from twenty years previous. Bell bottoms made a comeback, sweat bands and large belts over larger shirts are now hip. Katie's experience of trying to go digital with scrap booking. Wanted to do some expensive program with lots of stuff, but decided that was too much clutter and didn't have time. Looked into doing a digital scrap book, but cost and usage didn't meet needs. Went to the local scrap booking store to plead for help. Her modern, new, and hip solution was a binder with plastic inserts that held six small size photos. When Aaron saw these they triggered a memory, where had he seen them before? Ah, yeah, at our parents house. Our mother has used that system since the 1970's to store our family pictures.

Computers have followed a similar course. In the beginning, computers were so expensive and so large, that only large companies and research universities had them. Mainframes were like a central repository. People would connect to them via dumb terminals, just a keyboard and monitor. They would have to schedule time to run their computations and

programs. Everything was text based. (Ceruzzi, P.E., 2003. *A History of Modern Computing 2nd ed.*, London, Eng: MIT Press.)

There was no precedent in how software was created, computer usage was created and determined “as it happened.” There was no distinction between producers and users. This helped the early builders of ARPANET (the precursor to the Internet) and later the Internet and even software development "adopt a new paradigm for managing the evolution of the system: rather than centralize design authority in a small group of network managers, they deliberately created a system that allowed any user with the requisite skill and interest to propose a new feature." (Abbate, J., 1999. *Inventing the Internet*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press., 5) Later, non technical users were able to contribute in a similar manner. Therefore, the success of the Internet was due to the flexibility of its users to shape it to meet their needs, rather than users using the product given to them. How would the oven be different as a product if all of the users had an intimate hand in its creation and development from beginning of design through to production and shipment? This flexibility also sustained the project through changing ownership, rapidly developing technology, and continually changing ideals and goals. The end result of the Internet, as a communications medium, was not inherent but came as the result of a "series of social choices." (Abbate, 1999, 6).

Throughout the 60s and 70s these new attitudes brought a change in the computer industry. In California, seemingly all within a 5 mile radius, the "cultural outlaws in the west" were changing the attitude of the computer. A desire arose for computers to no longer be owned just by large businesses and universities, where access was a shared terminal connecting to a big iron, very expensive, business only machine. Computers were to be liberated and given to

individuals as a tool for improvement of the mind (Markoff, J., 2005. *What the Dormouse Said: How the Sixties Counterculture Shaped the Personal Computer Industry*, New York: Viking Penguin., 242). Apple computers, Microsoft teaming up with IBM. The race to give every person in America a computer was on. Everybody would have their own access to enormous amounts of computer power, software, and media.

Fast forward to today. With the introduction of GHz of processing power, PB of storage and massive file sizes for images and video, we are reverting back to the main frame days and storing data and applications on company's huge central servers. Google offers email accounts with 7GB of storage, and counting (http://mail.google.com). Flickr offers storage for images, with limits only on the number per month (for free accounts) (http://flickr.com). Adobe offers an online version of Photoshop for editing videos (http://photoshop.com). Zoho offers an office suite usable in your browser (http://www.zoho.com/). Youtube offers a way to easily share video (http://youtube.com). The list can go on and on of companies that now offer services on the Web that once belonged on your desktop.

We can easily be overwhelmed with the many choices there are to create records of our family history. I'm not going to make things easier. I'm just going to show you a few things that I use to record the history of my family, and help keep my family in touch.

Different tools for recording family history:

http://www.familybuilder.com/
http://www.geni.com/
http://lythgoes.net/genealogy/software.php
http://www.phpmyfamily.net/
http://www.phpgedview.net/
http://www.famento.com/index.aspx

An excellent way to communicate with family, and also record the communications is through the use of forums, blogs and email list serves. For a year my family, especially the younger cousins kept up lively and wonderful connections through the use of a family forum. Many of my siblings and siblings-in-laws and friends maintain a blog that updates everyone who cares about their goings ons. The most successful tool has been the use of an email list serve. During the hurricane that swept through Houston this year, it was through the email list serve that we all found out about how my sister, and Aunt and Uncle and their family were faring. We even created an elaborate story with many people sharing in the telling.

I present two more tools that can be used to store, share and control family history information. Zotero and Omeka.

Zotero (http://zotero.org): Tool for categorizing, tagging, grabbing, storing and sharing.

- getting stuff into your library
- look at screen casts
- highlighting and annotation
- archiving pages
- all becomes part of full text search (so a page with thousands of names is easy to archive and search).
- set up collections and tags how you want

1.5 - rich text editing
2.0 is groups, sharing item, sharing the actual documents,

- publishing your library as an archive, use Zotero to house the archive

Omeka (http://omeka.org): Tool for showing and sharing documents.

- free and open source
- putting stuff into omeka
- creating a collection
- creating an exhibit
- very easy tool to display and show family documents, images and such.