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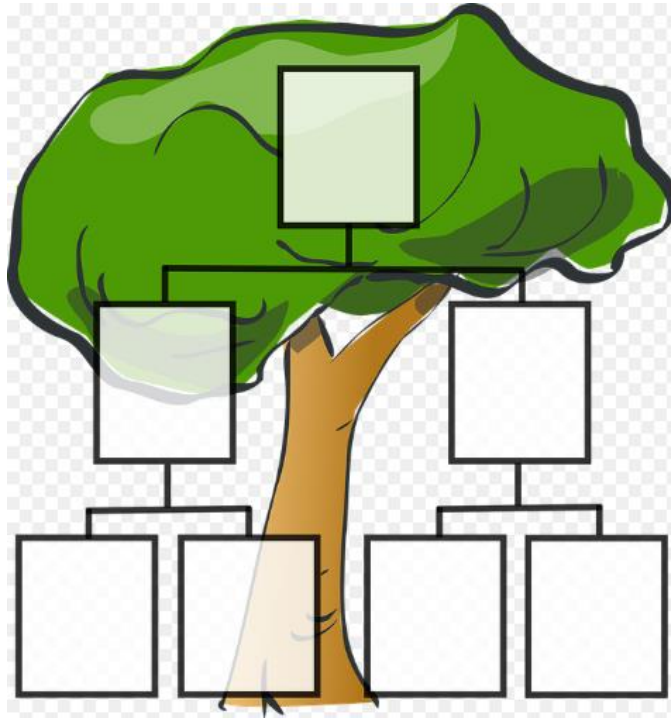
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Introduction to Genealogy

Introduction to Genealogy (CCL/HH – rev1)

Topics:

- Introduction
- Resources
- Tools
- Challenges
- Tips
- DNA Testing
- References



Introduction to Genealogy (CCL/HH – rev1)

Introduction

Per Wikipedia: “Genealogy, *also known as family history, is the study of families and the tracing of their lineages and history. Genealogists use oral interviews, historical records, genetic analysis, and other records to obtain information about a family and to demonstrate kinship and pedigrees of its members. The results are often displayed in charts or written as narratives.*”

This class provides an introduction to the process of tracking down and documenting your ancestors. We start by reviewing the various resources that are available for looking up family records. Then we talk about some of the tools that can be used to document your family tree. We'll explore the many challenges encountered when doing genealogy research. Then I provide some tips for uncovering hard to find facts about your ancestry.

Resources

There are a number of resources for performing genealogy research. Most of them are free.

These free resources include:

- Interviews with living family members and friends of the family – don't wait too long to conduct interviews with older family members



- Personal recollections – for example, I remember my dad saying his ancestors came from Birmingham, England
- Ancestry.com – available for free at various Chester County Library locations. Note that Ancestry.com is only accessible from library computers. Or, you can bring your laptop into the library. Note, this allows you to download records directly to the laptop.

Introduction to Genealogy (CCL/HH – rev1)

- Familysearch.com - available for free courtesy of the Mormons. You must sign up for an account. This resource provides access to many of the same databases as Ancestry.com.
- The National Archives – but you must visit to see records as most records are not online.
- Old family photo albums – sometimes photos have key information written on the back. The photo itself may provide clues.



- Google searches – for example I found an online posting that my mom made regarding possible connections to a notable relative

And here are some resources that you may have to pay for:

- Individual records are available for a fee from various state and federal agencies. The quality and applicability of each record can usually only be determined after the record is purchased.
- DNA testing – to gather hints about where your ancestors came from and link up with potential relatives
- More extensive records may be available with an Ancestry.com subscription.

Note that Ancestry, Familysearch and state/federal agencies only provide direct records about people that are deceased.

Genealogy records come from a number of sources. These include:

- Censuses – US (1940 and earlier), State, and international
- Birth, baptism, christenings
- Marriage
- Death
- Military
- Immigration
- Newspapers

Tools

There are various books and other sources that offer instructions, advice and materials for conducting and collecting genealogy research. Online tutorials (on platforms such as YouTube) are also available.

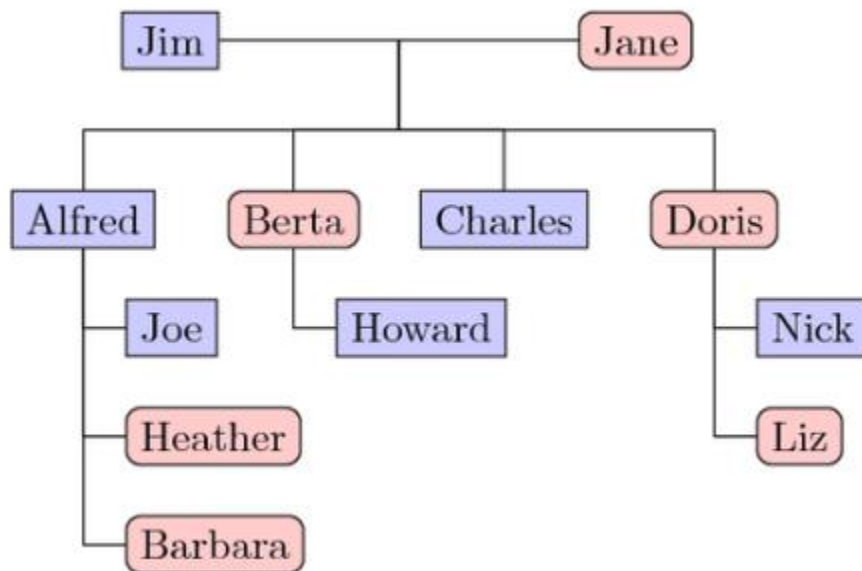
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The **Reference** section at the end of this document lists just a portion of the books and other resources that are available from the Chester County Library system.

As you gather information about your family, it is important to capture that info in a form that:

- Retains the information you have uncovered
- Is easy to update and modify
- And that provides a good platform for further research.

The classic family tree diagram is one example.



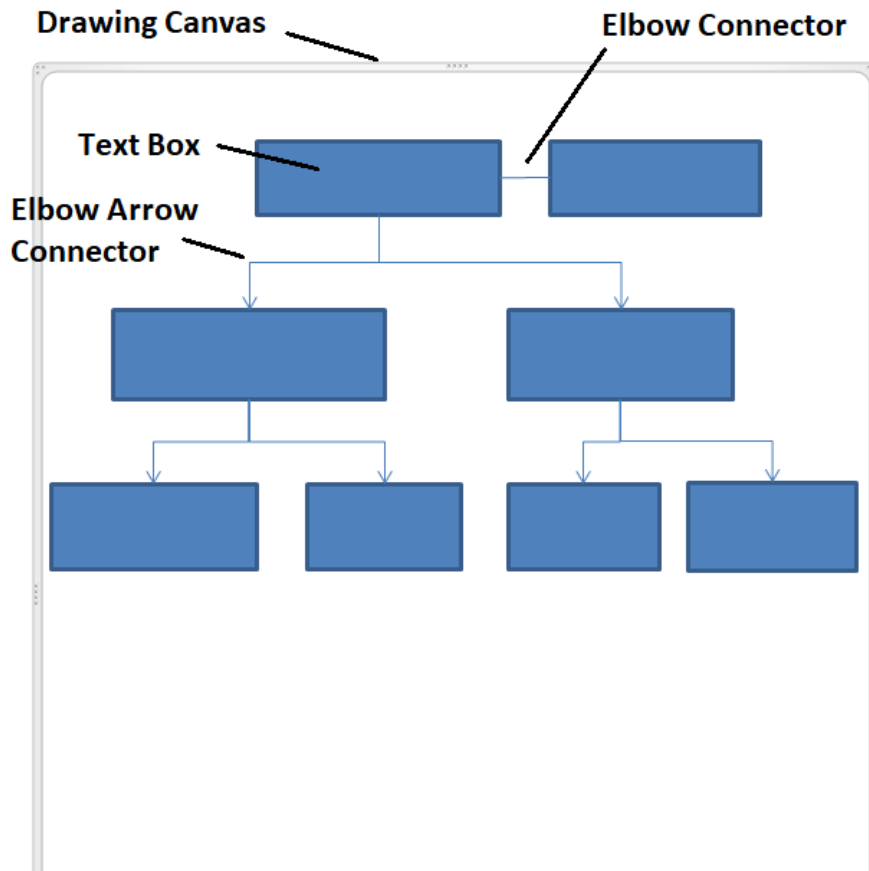
Quite a number of products are available to help capture this information. You can purchase a genealogy app that provides both the research tools and charting tools. Some of the more popular apps are:

- Family Historian 6 - easy to use
- Legacy Family Tree 9 – good for managing data
- Heredis 2017 – great charting tools
- Roots Magic 7 – good overall product
- Branches – very inexpensive (~ \$15)

Or you can do it yourself. I have found **Microsoft WORD** to be a good tool for building my family tree and logging the associated records. My family tree is built by placing **Text boxes** and **Connectors** (the lines between the boxes) inside a **Drawing canvas**. When the tree is built in this way, the boxes can be resized and moved and the connectors move automatically. I use **Elbow Arrow Connectors** to tie parents with children and **Elbow Connectors** (no arrow) to connect siblings to each other. Note a 3+ generation tree probably won't all fit on one page. WORD cross references can be used to provide links between pages.

See the diagram below:

Introduction to Genealogy (CCL/HH – rev1)



My genealogy WORD document also contains a chronological list of each relevant record found on Ancestry or FamilySearch record and the contents of that record including; the name of the relative, birth date (in parentheses), location, occupation, relative's parents and siblings, etc. Here is an example of one record. My great-grandfather's name is in **bold** font. Note the source of the record is listed last:

- Great-great grandparents Charles (1826) and K. (1831) living in Birmingham, England with children William (1852), **Henry** (1857), Frederick (?), John (1853), Sarah (1859) – per the 1861 England Census

I may also decide to add the actual record images and photographs to my WORD document.

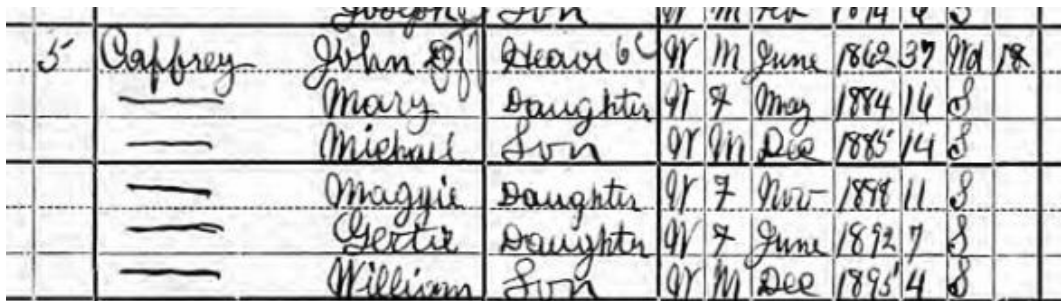
Challenges

Researching your ancestors can be very difficult. It's kind of like putting together a jigsaw puzzle with missing pieces and with pieces that don't really belong.

Your relatives may have fuzzy or incorrect recollections. My mom was convinced her grandfather's first name was George. But all the records show it was Frederick. Maybe George was a great uncle, or maybe Frederick had a middle name of George that he used as a nickname.

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Older records were hand written and were transcribed into printed form. Transcribing these records into printed text was (and is) error prone.



3-	Caffrey	John	Son	60	Y	M	June	1862	37
		Mary	Daughter		Y	F	May	1884	14
		Michael	Son		Y	M	Dec	1885	14
		Maggie	Daughter		Y	F	Nov	1891	11
		Gertie	Daughter		Y	F	June	1892	7
		William	Son		Y	M	Dec	1893	4

The original records can also have errors. These errors include misspellings and errors of omission. Many records have only partial information. For example:

- Most records have an individual's age but not a specific birth date. So the actual birth date that may be off by a year.
- A record may have a name and a birth date, but no location
- Immigration records (including passenger lists) may have just a name and a date and place of arrival
- Middle names are often left out
- Maiden names are often left out

The information provided to people like census takers by family members can also be incorrect or misleading. For example, birth dates can be off a bit. Parents' recollections may be fuzzy. Sometimes people lied about their age or the age of their children or other things. Nicknames were sometimes provided instead of full names (see "Gertie" in the record above). Often people did not know how to write, so name spelling tended to drift over the generations. In addition, many names were Anglicized when arriving in America (my grandfather's name was changed from "Marcel" to "Martin").

Very common first and last names are a particular challenge. You may find several records for people with the same first and last name, all with similar birth dates and living in the same city. It can be hard figuring out which of these records (if any) is correct.

Another challenge, especially going back in time, is identifying many people living together at the same address. A single residence might house 10 or more people – grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins (all with similar names).

Introduction to Genealogy (CCL/HH – rev1)

409	Kaffrey Ann	40	3	W	Washington
	Michael	13	M	W	Idaho
	Mamie	12	3	W	at home
	John L	9	M	W	at school
	Margaret	8	3	W	" "
	Kellen Goldrey	34	M	W	Clark Drug Store
	Pileman James	60	M	W	Chemist
	Henry Robert	25	M	W	Teacher
	Oliver Patrick	20	M	W	Farmer
	Clark Thomas	20	M	W	Student



In addition, people died or divorced and remarried. Orphans often end up living with aunts and uncles.

Tips

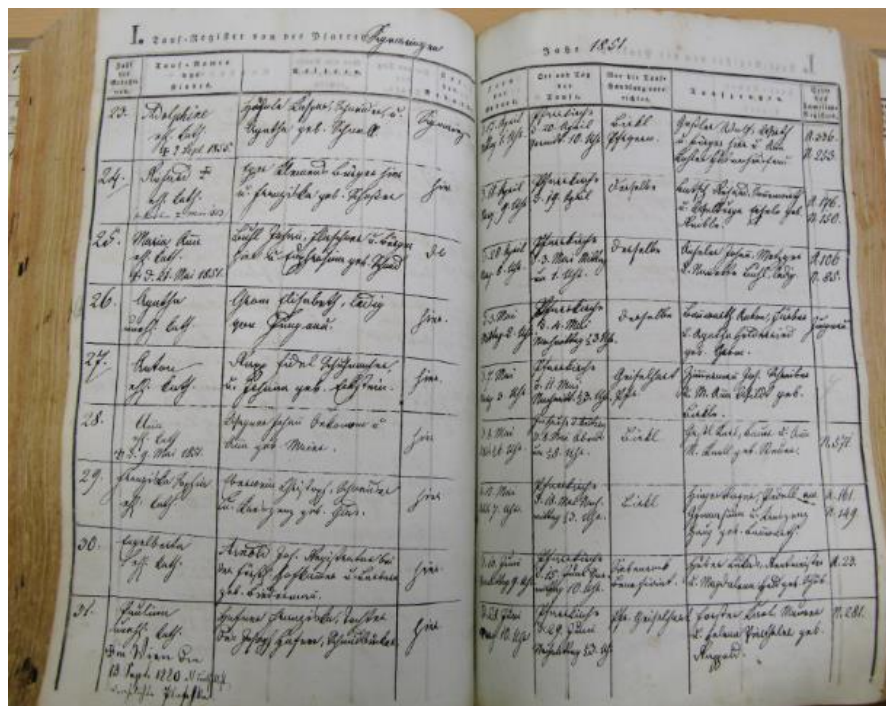
The following suggestions may help you gather accurate information about your family tree:

1. Start with your most recent relatives (parents). Then move on to their parents (your grandparents) and so on. Generally, information is harder to find as you go farther back in time.
2. As you collect individual records, be sure to capture all relevant information including:
 - Names (including middle names and initials)
 - Birth dates (including month and day if available) and places (city, state, country)

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- Places (residence, birth, marriage, death, immigration, etc.)
- Origins – parents' and siblings' birth dates and places
- Sources (US and state censuses, birth/death/marriage records, church records, city listings)
- Source images (not always available but often handy as they can provide additional information not in the source listing). Also useful for resolving transcription errors.)
- Names and other relevant information for the siblings, aunts and uncles, etc. living with your ancestor



- Use these records and other information you have gathered to start to build your family tree:
 - Include birth dates in the tree
 - Include siblings (e.g. your cousins, aunts and uncles) in the tree
- Examine the information you have collected and look for correlations that may help identify your ancestors. Key correlators include:

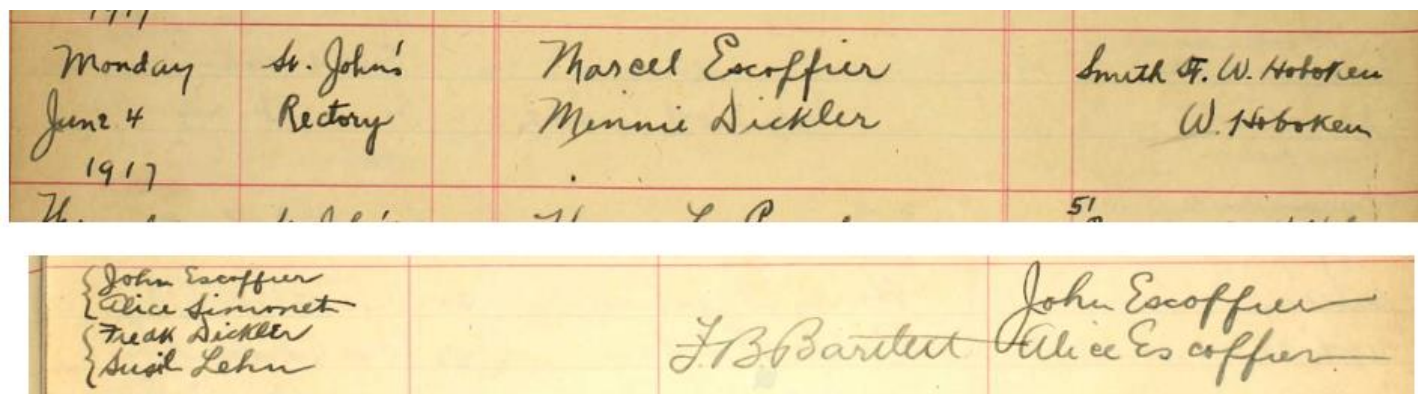
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- Birth date and location – from a practical perspective, consider a range of birth dates, plus or minus a couple of years
- Residence location - 50 years ago people generally didn't move around as much as today, so city and state locations can be very helpful. A specific street name and house number provides great correlation.
- Middle names or initials when available
- Maiden names
- Names, birth dates and birth places of close relatives (siblings, parents, aunts and uncles). Note that marriage records may include the names of relatives who were present as witnesses.
- Occupation – one of my ancestors made rat traps for most of his life

Here is an example in the use of correlating factors to track down my mother's grandparents:

- **Fredrick** and **Susanna Dickler** (my great-grandparents) had a child Minnie (my grandmother) in 1886 per the 1915 **New Jersey** census
- **Fredrick** and **Susanna Dickler** were living in **West Hoboken, New Jersey** with children Fredrick, William, **Minnie**, Amie and Andrew in 1895 per the 1895 New Jersey census
- **Fredrick** and **Susanna Dickler** were living in West Hoboken, New Jersey with children Fredrick, William and **Minnie** and Andrew in **West Hoboken, New Jersey** in 1915 per the 1915 New Jersey census
- **Minnie Dickler** married **Marcel Escoffier** (my grandfather)(both from **Hoboken, New Jersey**) in 1917 with **Fred Dickler** and **Susanna Dickler** present per New Jersey Episcopal Diocese of Newark Church Records 1809-1816, 1825-1970

The correlating factors are my great grandparents' names, their location (West Hoboken, NJ) and their presence at my grandparents' wedding.



Here is another (trickier) example. I am not 100% sure about my paternal grandmother's parents (my great-grandparents). But I have tentatively identified them based on the following records:

- John Caffrey and Mary (Dolan) Caffrey had a baby, **Michael** in 1886 per **New Jersey** Births 1670-1980

Introduction to Genealogy (CCL/HH – rev1)

- Gertrude Caffrey (my grandmother)(born in **New Jersey** in **June, 1890**) was living with my Grandfather Henry Sheldon in Kearney, New Jersey per the 1915 New Jersey census
- John Caffrey and Mary E. (Dolan) Caffrey had a baby (Gertrude?) in **June, 1890** in **Newark, New Jersey** per New Jersey Births 1670-1980
- John Caffrey (wife deceased) with was living with his daughter “Gertie” (born in **June 1892**) and his son **Michael** (born in 1886) in **Newark, New Jersey** in 1900 per the 1900 US Census
- Gertrude Caffrey was living with sibling **Michael** (born 1885) in **Newark, New Jersey** in 1905 per the 1905 New Jersey Census
- Gertrude Sheldon (born in **New Jersey** in **1891**) was living with her husband **Henry Sheldon** (my Grandad) and child Henry (my Dad) in **Newark, New Jersey** per the 1920 US Census

The correlators in this case are my Grandmother’s birth date (and month) and birth place, the name and birth date of her older sibling (Michael) and where they were living (Newark, NJ). My Grandmother’s birth dates are a little off (+/- 2 years) but I think that wasn’t uncommon.

5. Share what you find with your relatives to facilitate future research.
6. Ancestry allows users to input their family trees. If these public trees overlap with your tree, they can provide valuable information that is not available from other sources. Note that these public trees may contain errors (like any resource).

DNA Testing



Having your DNA tested has several benefits. It may help you better identify your origins (or confirm your origins). It can also link you with potential relatives that have also had their DNA tested. There is some controversy as to how accurately the test results pinpoint your origins. And results may vary from company to company. Also, you and your sibling may not return identical results (there is some randomness with DNA inheritance). Note some companies will also test your DNA for potential health issues.

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There are three kinds of DNA tests:

- Autosomal DNA – the most common type of testing. Traces both male and female DNA. But is less accurate for older generations of your family as DNA gets modified with each generation. Only reliable back to your great-great-grandparents.
- Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) – traces relatives much farther back in time but only on the maternal side. Better for tracing places of origins than for finding relatives.
- Y-Chromosome DNA - traces relatives much farther back in time but only on the paternal side. Also, only men can be tested.

There are a number of companies that perform DNA testing. They each have strengths and weaknesses. Some of the most popular companies are:

- **CRI Genetics** – Sophisticated test analysis. Offer all three kinds of DNA tests. However, Testing may be backordered and Mitochondrial and Y-Chromosome testing are not always available.
- **23andMe** – All three kinds of DNA tests offered. Many health reports offered. Limited return policy. Some marketing information is misleading.
- **Ancestry** - Autosomal DNA testing only. Has the largest database of users. Limited health reports.
- **MyHeritage** - Very affordable, but you must pay for shipping the DNA samples. Autosomal DNA testing only. No health screening.
- LivingDNA – More expensive. Includes Autosomal, mitochondrial and Y-Chromosome testing. Can take up to 12 weeks to get results.
- GPS Origins – More expensive. Focused on identifying your origins by location. No family matching features.
- Vitagene – Focused on testing for health issues. Provides recommendations for diet and supplements.

Note some companies (such as FamilyTreeDNA) will allow you to upload your “raw DNA” data from another company into their system for analysis. But you may have to pay to see some of the results of that analysis.

Privacy is another consideration. Most companies have implemented extensive measures to guard against having your data hacked. In addition, companies that help find relatives will usually let you decide how much information is shared with potential relatives.

I had my DNA tested by MyHeritage. My origins results were mixed (informative and yet confusing). Two of my lineages (on my Dad's side) made perfect sense. The findings on my Mom's side were very puzzling. I'm pretty sure my maternal great grandparents immigrated from France & Germany. But the DNA records do not seem to back this up. I am hoping my brother will get his DNA tested to see how the results compare.

Introduction to Genealogy (CCL/HH – rev1)

Other Resources from CCLS:

1. The Henrietta Hankin Library offers a Digital Discovery Center, providing one-on-one tutoring on a number of technology topics. Contact the Reference Desk to schedule an appointment.
2. Organize your genealogy: strategies and solutions for every researcher / Drew Smith – Tredyffrin Library Non-Fiction. CALL NO. 929.1 S
3. The family tree guide to DNA testing and genetic genealogy / Blaine T. Bettinger – Chester County Library – Non-Fiction. CALL NO. 929.1072 B
4. How to use Evernote for genealogy : a step-by-step guide to organize your research and boost your genealogy productivity / Kerry Scott – Tredyffrin Library Non-Fiction. CALL NO. 929.1072 S
5. Mastering online genealogy / W. Daniel Quillen – Henrietta Hankin Library – Non-Fiction. CALL NO. 929.1028 QUI
6. Advanced genealogy research techniques / George G. Morgan, Drew Smith – Henrietta Hankin Library – Non-Fiction. CALL NO. 929.1072 MOR
7. Genealogy online for dummies – Henrietta Hankin Library – Non-Fiction. CALL NO. 929.1028 GEN 7th ed. 2014
8. The complete idiot's guide to genealogy / by Christine Rose and Kay Germain Ingalls – Henrietta Hankin Library – Non-Fiction. CALL NO. 929.1072 ROS