The USGenWeb Project

N E W S

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TIME TO VOTE
Ellen Pack, Election Committee Chair
Voting will begin in the USGenWeb National Election on Thursday, July 1, 2004. All registered USGenWeb Members will receive a voting password that will contain instructions on voting. Please allow two to three days to receive the password.
If you do not receive a password, contact your EC representative.
Please include your full name, the state(s)/project(s) in which you volunteer, and your positions within those project. e.g. CC, SC, FM, etc.
Voting will continue through the month of July. Please visit the EC National 2004 Election Web Pages for announcements and pertinent information on the positions, and the candidates.

BYLAWS REVISION NEWS
Roger Swafford, Bylaws Revision Committee Chair
The Advisory Board has considered the committee report submitted 14 May 04 and voted on four questions related to the Bylaws Revision:

- **The report has been returned to the BRC for further work**
- **The Bylaws Revision does not require state sponsorship**
- **The Bylaws Revision must be reported back to the Advisory Board when feasible but not later than 60 days prior to the 2005 election cycle, and may be presented for adoption by the membership in a special referendum authorized by the Advisory Board.**
- **Members shall have the ability to vote on each article of the revision**

The BRC has openings for three members. Anyone interested in helping refine the revision should contact the National Coordinator or the BRC Chair. The BRC is expected to resume deliberations after the July 4th holiday. A comparison of Revised & Current Articles is available online.
Members are encouraged to send comments to committee members listed on the committee website or to the Discuss email list. You may subscribe to the Discuss mail list by sending an email to USGENWEB-DISCUSS-L-request@RootsWeb.com Put the word SUBSCRIBE in the body of the message, and nothing else.

TOOL TIME
Shari Handley, Representative at Large

First, let me say that I have nothing in particular against the query boards that the "Big Guys" have. I've utilized them, I've perused them, and I even administer a couple of 'em. But when it comes to my own USGenWeb county sites, I prefer to "do my own thing" for queries. You, too? With lots of tips and encouragement from online friends, and a lot of good old fashioned trial and error, I finally put together a very useable automatic "guestbook" style query system. It allows users to enter their information using an online form, and when they submit it...Presto!...It automatically writes to a web page.

I am not the Project's most technically proficient person. So, while I know that my nifty query thingamajig will work on the county sites that are hosted on RootsWeb, I would imagine that they'd also work, perhaps with some modifications, on sites hosted elsewhere.

I also use CCHelper to manage my queries. Remember CCHelper? Yep, it is still a really cool query management program, in my book. The neat thing about my guestbook-style query system is that it is set up to easily import the queries into CCHelper in the right format. You don't have to use CCHelper, but if you do, this system will make the job of importing easier.

With all that out of the way, I'd like to invite anyone interested to check out the little tutorial I've prepared for making your OWN query system like mine, and look at some real-life examples. Feel free to use it, modify it, fold, spindle, or mutilate it. Well, maybe not mutilate it. But fold and spindle to your heart's content. And remember—Have Fun!

EDITOR NEEDED!
Isaiah Harrison

When I took on the production of this newsletter, it was a temporary assignment. I intended to edit the newsletter only long enough to get it off the ground. That has happened and it's time to find a more permanent editor.

The USGenWebNEWS editor is a volunteer position, like all positions in USGenWeb. The newsletter editor is responsible for producing a brief once-a-month, non-political newsletter for USGenWeb Members. The purposes of the newsletter are to make Project members more aware that they are part of an important national organization, help them feel some connection to it and provide them with useful information for developing their county sites. The newsletter is distributed via email in order to reach every project member (except those who specifically request not to receive it). It is currently formatted with minimal html to make it stand out, and is archived.

Appropriate articles include announcements from the Election Committee and other Project committees, articles highlighting the accomplishments of County Coordinators and Special Projects, how-to articles that would be helpful to County Coordinators, general genealogical news that is important for CCs to be aware of, and whatever else the editor can think of.

You will not be working alone. The USGenWebNEWS currently has on staff an excellent Copy Editor, Greta Thompson, who is able to write articles as necessary, edit material submitted by other members, and give the copy for the newsletter a final once-over to check for typos and grammatical errors--and find them!

Distribution is easy. The final copy is simply emailed to an address provided at Indiana University and gets distributed from there.

I think being editor of The USGenWebNEWS is a great opportunity to contribute to the USGenWeb Project by doing something you really enjoy. Whether you are more interested in the writing, the graphics or the organizational aspects, it's possible to find others to do the parts you don't want to do yourself. The newsletter has been published for only a few months, so there are many types of articles and ways of presenting them that haven't been explored yet.

Please contact the editor if you're interested.

SHORT STUFF
Genealogy Search Help for Google This free site will help you use Google™ to research your genealogy. It will create different Google searches using tips or "tricks" that will likely improve your search results. The different searches will give you many different ways of using Google to find ancestry information on the Internet.

As you undoubtedly know, a gazetteer is one of the important books for a genealogist, providing a quick way to locate geographical sites. The Probert Encyclopaedia includes an online gazetteer listing "over 70,000 countries, states, counties, departments, provinces, cities, towns, villages, hamlets, rivers, seas and other places of the world." It's important to remember that this is not a historical gazetteer, so places that no longer exist will not usually be included...

...but there are places to find Archaic Medical Terms, from Abasia-Astasia to Zymotic, and Jobs of the Past, like hooker or tipstaff.

Social and fraternal organizations played a large role in our ancestor's lives, and freemasonry was one of the most important. A Page about Freemasonry is an extensive site with essays on what Masonry is, as well as news, questions and answers, letters, announcements, and other web sites.

Railroads were an important factor in the migration of our ancestors in the second part of the 19th century, as well as in the establishment and fortunes of towns. If your town was on a railroad line, the businesses and farmers were likely to thrive. If not, well, little towns dwindled and disappeared. Railroads were also a big employer. The following links should help you if your ancestor worked for the railroad: Railroad Records & Genealogical Information Before 1937 and The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board and Genealogical Information After 1936.

BLOGS EXPLAINED

Dick Eastman, Genealogy Journalist.

The following article is from Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter and is copyright 2004 by Richard W. Eastman. It is re-published here with the permission of the author. Information about the newsletter.

The word "blog" sounds like one of those "techie words" that describes some black magic understood only by programmers, systems analysts, and others who regularly invoke incantations not understood by mere mortals. In fact, blogs are actually very simple, perhaps even simpler than the Web page or e-mail message that you are now viewing at this moment. You can read blogs easily, even without a technical understanding of the underlying technology. The purpose of this article is to help de-mystify the word "blog."

Blog is short for "web log." Blogger.com defines a blog as "a web page made up of usually short, frequently updated posts that are arranged chronologically - like a what's new page or a journal. They contain information related to a specific topic." Does that sound familiar? Yes, this newsletter has been a Web log, or blog, for more than eight years!

In some cases blogs are used as daily diaries about people's personal lives, political views, or even as social commentaries. In other cases, a blog is an e-newsletter. The truth of the matter is that blogs can be shaped into whatever the author wants them to be.

The roots of blogging can be traced back to the mid 1990s although they did not really take hold until 1999. The original "weblogs" were personal commentaries full of links to other Web sites. Today, however, blogs have evolved into news sites and other Web content.

Blogs come in several formats. They can be written as normal HTML pages like any other Web page. In fact, this newsletter has been a blog in HTML for years. However, in the past few years, specialized software has been developed which simplifies creation of blogs and also allows easy "syndication" (republishing of articles elsewhere). You may not recognize the names of the tools, but then again, you don't need to know much about them, not even if you want to create a blog of your own. You may see programming terms like XML, RSS, RDF or Atom bantered about, but as a user, all you need to do is open a Web browser.

Most blogs will let you read their documents either as text in a standard Web browser or by using special "newsreader" programs. Newsreaders take the best of two worlds–Web ease and email familiarity–letting you read the news you want simply and quickly. In most cases, the newsreader will download new blog items the same way your email program downloads new messages; you can then read your blogs offline at your leisure, something that dial-up users will especially appreciate. Unlike e-mail programs, however, these readers are not subject to spam messages or spam filters since they do not use mail servers. Also, even though the blogs are a kind of Web page, newsreaders let you choose the information you want to read; you are never bothered with unwanted advertising intrusions from third parties, pop-up windows you never asked for, or mazes of Web pages that make you forget where you started.

There many newsreader programs available today for Windows, Macintosh, and Linux systems. Many newsreaders are available free of charge. Some come bundled in with other software; for example, Opera, a free Web browser and e-mail program for Windows and Linux, already has a built-in blog XML reader. I have read reports that the next release of Microsoft's Outlook and Outlook Express also will include XML newsreader capabilities. Finally, there is even an online blog reader, which I will describe later in this newsletter.

A free XML newsreader for Windows that I have been using lately is called SharpReader. This is a Windows program with a user-interface that looks like a combination of a web-browser and an email program. Like a browser, it has an address bar at the top that allows you to view a blog without forcing you to first subscribe to it. Like an e-mail program, it has a familiar three-pane user-interface. The pane on the left lists the blogs you subscribe to instead of the mailbox folders you have for your email. Instead of a list of new messages at the top-right, you see a list of item-headlines in the currently selected blog. Lastly, item-contents fill the bottom right pane where your email program would display a message. Also like an e-mail program, it periodically checks for new articles. But the best part of all is that, unlike an email program, you don't get bombarded with spam. I find this program very simple to use. SharpReader is available free of charge.

Most blog newsreaders also allow you to look at several news sites that are publishing in XML now. It's hard to imagine the speed and ease of displaying exactly what you want, but people who try out a newsreader seem pleased and even relieved with its simplicity. It only takes a mouse click from the list on the left to quickly move between this newsletter, world news, stock market info, and your favorite comic strip, all in one application that is as easy to use as your present e-mail program.

Blogs are becoming popular among genealogists, both for news and for keeping journals of research activities. They obviously work well for newsletters. Family societies are discovering that blogs are also excellent methods of coordinating research among several members. There are a number of genealogy blogs available today, including:

- **Short Family Web Site Web Log (blog) designed to bring the latest news from the members of the Short Family and their web site to friends and family**
- **Louis Kessler's Blog detailing the development of a new genealogy program**
- **Matt Misbach's Genealogy News (you will need an XML RSS newsreader for this one)**

- **GenealogyBlog by Heritage Creations**
- **Geneablogy**
- **Enriching Lives with Ancestral Ties**
- **BlogTree**
- **Marc Nozell's Mini-Blog**

  And now
- **Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter**

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  The USGenWeb NEWS is archived at
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