

WMJGS: MANAGING THE DATA YOU HAVE COLLECTED

You probably will need all three:

1. Files for your Original Papers and your Photos
2. Software on YOUR Computer
3. Online Databases

1. Files for our Original Papers and your Photos

For most genealogical materials, it is the content that matters and not the actual originals.

Nevertheless, having an original photo of your great grandparents or of their ketubah is priceless. Names and dates are the core of genealogy results, but often it is the originals that we value most.

Of lower importance are documents like birth certificates (because they can be replaced) or letters written by deceased ancestors (in which the content usually is more valuable than the physical papers).

These should be backed up digitally, if only by taking smart phone photos and storing them in a computer or in a secure online site. Also, you can transcribe handwritten letters using your voice on a smartphone.

Try to find a way to keep the originals so that:

- they are SAFE [from damage or loss], and
- they are EASY TO FIND [since you may need to review the contents].

2. Software on YOUR Computer

Piles of papers can be overwhelming. Good computer software allows you to organize the information and maintain appropriate digital copies of photos and priceless documents. Most software allows you to share data with others (through GEDCOM files). They generate printable family trees and Ancestor/Descendant charts, either abridged or with lots of details.

Check out "genealogy software" reviews on the internet. You will be using it a lot. Generally, you are likely to do most of your work on a computer, since smart phone screens are small.

3. Online Databases (mostly for research, but some have good posting and storage features)

Online databases allow you to share data with others, access other data already on the internet, and may allow your family data to be permanently stored for descendants and future researchers.

- Ancestry.com (3 million subscribers, 10 billion records)
 - Very widely used; good for sharing
 - \$\$ to access [your family tree database is included in membership]
 - May be shared or kept confidential
 - Provides "hints" that may or may not be helpful; sources not required
 - Limited access to others: they must continue paid membership and open emails
- Wikitree.org (580 thousand members)
 - Free to access non-profit; regular email addresses
 - Sources required: reduces substantially incorrect data
 - As a "wiki", you may correct others' data and they may correct yours
 - Plans for maintaining data even if/when the organization dies
- Familytree.com
 - Free to access
 - Sources not required
 - May be (or must be?) shared
- Geni.com (11 million users) & MyHeritage.com (92 million users)
 - Partly free
 - DNA matches
 - Israeli-founded
- JewishGen.org (Family Tree of the Jewish People) (over 7 million records on 6,200 trees)