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From the Selected Works of James Gross

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Data backup: Save your data and browser bookmarks

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CHRONICLES

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דברי הימים



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REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR CHRONICLES TEAM

July 2014



During the past two weeks, I took advantage of a lull in my editing responsibilities to at long last resume my personal genealogy research, focusing specifically on some unresolved issues. Years ago I had uncovered individuals in New Haven and Philadelphia with

the same surnames as two of my branches. At that time, I wasn't able to find a definitive link that would ascertain connections. I found it exhilarating to once again engross myself in the research process. I pursued these threads for hours at a time. One could say I was obsessed; I stayed up into the wee hours of the morning, completely absorbed. My great grandmother, Mollie, had a brother, Srul, who had settled in New Haven. I wondered why. When I discovered a considerable number of Mandelsteins living in New Haven before he arrived, I theorized that Uncle Srul had settled there because his sister's Mandelstein *machetunim* (in-laws) were already there, so there was a comfort level he could depend upon. At this point, I'm trying to contact descendants of those Mandelsteins in the hopes of finding a common ancestor.

I shared my newfound enthusiasm with Shelda Sander, who had experienced a similar hiatus while serving as coordinator of JGSGP's Delaware County affiliate. She is excited with every new bit of information and feels sorry for people who aren't interested in their own genealogy. "Look at all the confusion, frustration, indecision, hair pulling, and 'fun' they are missing!"

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bound books are expensive and seem a bit 20th century, though we're considering them. Sharing information through social media or commercial genealogy websites also seems precarious: web portals can shut down without warning, and even if they don't, their future corporate owners could always decide to delete old data and old accounts.

We don't have a perfect solution yet. But we'll hash it out at our next reunion, over a batch of spinach borekas. ♦

References:

(1) *The names of these delicacies vary by region and family. In our family, a "boreka" is usually a type of savory pastry made with thin, light, hand-kneaded dough. Similar pastries made with phyllo dough, which are also known as borekas in much of the world, we simply call "a phyllo."*

(2) *Kupeta (sometimes written "koopeta") is a Passover candy made from honey, sugar and matzah meal. Similar Pesach treats exist throughout the Jewish world, but I have only heard Sephardic families from Kastoria call it by this name.*

Steven Capsuto is a part-time historian and full-time professional translator of various languages, including Judeo-Spanish (popularly known as Ladino). He was born in Philadelphia in 1964, grew up in Cherry Hill, and lived in Center City from 1989 to 2006. He resides in New York City.

Steven is currently reading anything he can find about the Sephardic communities of Greece in the 19th and early 20th centuries, especially anything about the Jews of Kastoria. At his family's next big reunion, he and his cousins will be trying to decide on reliable, durable ways to make their family history available to future generations.

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DATA BACKUP: SAVE YOUR DATA AND BROWSER BOOKMARKS

by James Gross



Data backup is a frequently discussed computer IT (Information Technology) topic. When you least expect it, your computer may suffer a momentary malfunction, or it may simply refuse to restart. Some of you may be very lucky and have never experienced a computer shut-down or loss of data. Others of you, however,

may be able to relate and understand the apprehension and annoyance when a computer unexpectedly shuts off or refuses to restart. So, how can you be more proactive?

In today's fast paced information highway, we are inundated with a multitude of information devices. These include tablets, laptops, and desktop computers. Computer users access and store information for both business as well as recreational purposes, such as genealogy, and, as we research and browse online, we exponentially accumulate an ever increasing amount of data files, image files, and bookmark links. Many of these data and image files as well as browser bookmarks are unique and cannot be replaced if lost. In a previous issue, I discussed options for data storage backup.¹

As the author Daniel Jones noted in his article on computer data backup, "It is absolutely critical that users understand that corruption happens, hard drives will fail, motherboards will short out, and mistakes will erase data."² There are a number of statistics which illustrate the relatively low percentage of periodic data backup by users.

Apparently, 35% of computer owners have NEVER backed up their computer, 51% of computer owners backup less than once a year or never, and women are 33% more likely than men to have never backed up their computer.³ On the positive side, the frequency of data backups seems to improve based on one's level of education. Thus, if you are a college graduate, statistically speaking, you are 75% more likely to have backed up your data.⁴

A short summary of data backup would include the obvious: have some sort of plan for data backup! I can appreciate that we are all creatures of habit and one of these habits may include being lazy in regard to occasionally spending time to back up important computer files and folders.

Now, as long as you have your important genealogy files stored in identifiable folders, such as "my documents," "genealogy files," or "family photos," it is readily apparent which folders you would select to backup. When you perform your periodic data backup, the folders could be copied to a portable hard drive or burned onto a DVD (digital visual disc). I don't feel it is really necessary or practical to try and backup the entire computer.

I recently ran into a problem when my computer began making strange noises. I shut it down, but it would not restart. I was not totally alarmed as I routinely back up most of my important files by saving them to a second, internal hard drive. However, I ran into another problem: I had neglected to create or save a backup for my browser bookmarks. And since I do quite a lot of genealogy and

reference searches, I had accumulated a lengthy list of browser bookmarks.

What are browser bookmarks? Browser bookmarks are those bookmarks which you have saved to help you locate a particular website or webpage. Three popular internet browsers are Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Chrome. Each of these browsers has an option to export and save a browser bookmark file. Internet Explorer's file is *Bookmark.htm*, Firefox's is *places.sqlite*, and Chrome's is *Bookmarks*.

Each browser has its own location and method of exporting a copy of the file should you need to recover it. For example, Internet Explorer has a "Favorites" button, Firefox users use the "show all bookmarks," and Chrome users access the bookmark manager.

There are a number of cloud based alternatives for saving and retrieving bookmarks. One popular service is called Google Bookmarks. A Google account is required. In addition, there are a number of other cloud based bookmark providers.^{5, 6} Several online blogs endorsed a free cloud based bookmark service called Xmarks and I may try it.⁷ For those with Macs, Bookkit, a fee based bookmark manager, may be worth looking at.⁸ The bottom line, please be smart and spend some time today to back up your important files and bookmarks and avoid the aggravation, wasted time, and expense which comes with computer malfunctions. ♦

References:

- (1) Gross, James. "A Brief Look at Computer Backup". *Chronicles, Volume 30-1* (Spring 2013), 4-5.
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- (3) Budman, Gleb (2011) 94% of Computer Users Still Risk Data Loss, *Backblaze Blog*. Retrieved 6/11/2014 from: <http://tiny.cc/nuqbhx>
- (4) Ibid.
- (5) List of cloud based bookmark providers: <http://alternativeto.net/software/xmarks/>
- (6) Alternative list of cloud based bookmark providers: <http://tinyurl.com/ok7lucx>
- (7) Xmarks. Website at: <http://www.xmarks.com/>
- (8) Bookkit. Website at: <http://www.everydaysoftware.net/bookkit/>

James Gross biography appears on page 6, following his article "Advantages of joining a Genealogy Society".

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SALVAGING YOUR PHOTOS AND MEMENTOES

by Marge Farbman



This past January a short circuit set fire to my house. Though it did not completely burn down, the damage was extensive. More damage was caused by smoke and heat than actual flames or water. Being a scrapbooker and the grandmother of eight, I had a ton of photos in frames on the walls and tabletops, in scrapbooks, in photo boxes, in cardboard boxes large and small, on our computers, and on CDs. Here's what I have learned so far from this experience.

Any digital photos on your computer are vulnerable to loss from the heat of fire. Depending on where they were at the time our computers melted to varying degrees. And, the soot of the fire gets into EVERYTHING and gums up the works. Remembering that heat rises, we were still surprised that things on the floor and the lower shelves of the bookcases were somewhat salvageable, but everything from table/desk height to the ceiling was pretty much destroyed, melted, or toasted by heat which reaches thousands of degrees according to the fire marshal.

Although the heat warped the jewel case of each CD, the content of the CDs themselves (our precious photos) was readable by my relatively new, one year old computer. CDs that were in a drawer were in better shape than the ones stored on the bookshelf. We carefully cleaned all of the CDs before attempting to read them in the new computers. Soot was even found in sealed cases.

I took my warped and twisted laptop to the Camera Shop in Bryn Mawr and asked the staff associate if he thought he could recover the data. He was able to recover not only my photos, but all my data as well. My husband's computer was in a different location and wasn't so lucky. He had not updated his computer in years so his old system was now not accessible, and although the old versions of programs worked fine for him, they could not be read by more recent versions of the programs, and his data could not be recovered. After experiencing this computer episode, I would recommend that you consider keeping your equipment and programs updated. If the manufacturer is not going to support your system, upgrade.

Photos on the wall or on tabletops suffered various problems. Some were just sooty but came out of the frame. These I gently rinsed in tepid water and used a soft cloth to wipe off soot that did not rinse off. I laid them on a towel and allowed them to air dry. The top protective surface has washed off but the image