Research techniques: Review of Jewishgen's FTJP database

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Available at: http://works.bepress.com/jamesgross/35/
if you want advanced features and charts. As a beginner you typically do not need the add-ons; they can be purchased later after you’ve acquired some experience. Reunion costs about $100 and includes everything.

All three programs are easy to download and install, bulletproof (i.e. hard to hurt) and easy to learn if you remember to play with them. If you want to use another program, go ahead but just make sure it is GEDCOM compatible. GEDCOM is a universal computer language that will let you transfer your data to another program should you want to. Any program you’re considering should clearly state if it is GEDCOM compatible.

When you get this far, start playing and check Chronicles for follow-up articles on software and your search.

Author Steve Schecter is JGSGP’s Vice President-Programs and an active advocate for our society. His enthusiasm for teaching beginners and encouraging them to pursue their family connections is infectious and inspiring. You can contact Steve at: programs@jgsgp.org

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES: REVIEW OF JEWISHGEN’S FTJP DATABASE

by James Gross

Beginning with this issue we will feature a column devoted to highlights of software, databases, websites, or special research techniques. JGSGP members are invited to email me if they have tech questions: techquestions@jgsgp.org.

For our first column topic, I will briefly highlight a few areas in the website (www.jewishgen.org) and then focus on one, specific component.

Founded in 1987, JewishGen has become the central online destination for Jewish genealogical research. More than 1000 volunteers throughout the world actively contribute to JewishGen’s ever growing collection of databases, resources and search tools. JewishGen has more than 400,000 users worldwide and allows them to search more than 14 million online records in databases for Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Germany, Lithuania, the United States, and other regions. JewishGen also has a searchable database (consisting of two million Holocaust records) which includes registrations from ghettos, transport lists, concentration camp records, and survivor lists.

Within the JewishGen website, the primary research databases include: the JewishGen Gazetteer (formerly the "ShtetlSeeker"), the JewishGen Communities database, the worldwide burial registry (JOWBR), the Holocaust database, country databases, the JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF), and the Family Tree of the Jewish People (FTJP). Ongoing projects (Yizkor Book, KehilaLinks, Family Pages, and ViewMate) are also contained within this enormous website.

There are discussion groups which enable researchers to connect, ask questions, exchange information and learn from others. They are categorized by general and specific areas/topics of interest. There is a helpful table of contents on the website.

Now I’d like to focus on the one database which I feel is very helpful for locating individuals and their associated family trees: the Family Tree of the Jewish People (FTJP). This is a searchable compilation of family trees submitted by individuals and is searchable by a variety of methods. Its central purpose is to enhance the ability of researchers to locate and identify family tree branches which are being researched. As of December 2010, JewishGen’s FTJP database exceeded five million names from 4200 contributors. In addition to submitting their own family trees, users can contact other researchers from within the database via a secure and anonymous email forwarding system. FTJP’s reach has broadened since 2010 when it began a partnership with MyHeritage.com. This merger provides Jewish genealogists with a special facility with which to create their family trees while also enabling MyHeritage.com users to see FTJP data.

The database works as follows:

A) Users submit a gedcom file (example: james.ged) by uploading them onto the JewishGen website. These gedcom files are files which most genealogy software programs can create as a file output.

B) Registered members of JewishGen (registration is free) can log into the FTJP website, type in the names they are looking for within the search engine, and click on the desired name.
The database search can be performed using the following two steps:

A) Users subscribe and become members of Jewish-Gen.
B) Users can then log in using their email and password to enter the site. They then perform name searches on the FTJP database.

Searches have three areas for customizable searching:

A) Given (first) name or town/country,
B) Type of search by surname “exact spelling”, using the “Daitch-Mokotoff Soundex” system, or “starting with this spelling”
C) “Order results by” with options to select from a drop down menu.

I usually select given name for my searches. Then I usually select the “Surname- Exact Spelling” option. See image #1 below.

For example, I searched for Nathan Steinberg who was my grandfather. As I want this precise name, I chose to use the “exact spelling” search option. The next option is the results order. I chose to order the results by given name. See Image #2 below.

See Image #3 (below) for partial search results:

The FTJP database returned 16 entries, including one from my Sept 2011 gedcom submission. JewishGen identifies your submissions with grey coloring of the entry. The little purple image to the left of my entry indicates that a viewable tree is available. Let’s click on my hyperlink entry, Nathan. See Image #4 below.

Image #5 below is a partial screenshot of the entry and shows part of Nathan’s tree.

There is a clickable button for users to contact the submitter. See Image #6 below.

In summary, the FTJP is a very useful primary resource which can be of help to Jewish genealogy researchers. I have found it useful to periodically check this and the other databases on JewishGen for updates. By the way, it looks like I need to update my gedcom file! ❖

Images 1-6: Courtesy JewishGen FTJP database and family tree (gedcom) data from the author.

Author James Gross recently graduated with a Master of Library & Information Science (MLIS) from Drexel University. He has been working on his family tree since the early 1990’s and is a periodic contributor to various genealogy newsletters.

James also has a genealogy website: http://tinyurl.com/gross-steinberg He can be reached at: navistar96@yahoo.com
REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR
CHRONICLES TEAM

Periodic reassessment is useful in a publication like ours. In order to be more “user friendly” we’ll be implementing a stylistic change beginning with this issue. Following the model used in many journals and magazines we’ll be organizing our content into definable sections and recurring columns. Take a look at the Table of Contents; you’ll notice headings such as “Commentary,” “Techniques, Tools, & Tips,” “Travel,” “Meeting Summaries & Updates,” “Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness & Brick Walls”, etc.

We thank specific individuals for volunteering to head recurring columns: “In the Beginning” (Steve Schecter), “Scrapbooking Q & A” (Marge Farbman), “Research Techniques” (James Gross), “Brick Wall Q & A” (Felicia Mode Alexander and Lois Sernoff).

Similarly, most organizations benefit from periodic re-evaluation. Our society’s strength stems from the efforts of our members. Just as Hillary Rodham Clinton wrote, “it takes a village to raise a child”, so it takes the active participation of many to create a well-oiled [organizational] machine. Refreshments at our monthly meetings don’t appear mysteriously from the sky, speakers aren’t knocking down our doors to share their expertise, without reminders from our membership vice-president we wouldn’t know the date, time, and location of our meetings, and our quarterly journal only succeeds with an infusion of new material from our readers.

Take a look at p. 2 of each issue of Chronicles where we list the officers and committee chairs of our society.

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