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From the Selected Works of James Gross

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A brief look at computer data backup

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CHRONICLES

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דברי הימים



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REFLECTIONS FROM YOUR CHRONICLES TEAM

Readers of *Chronicles* may recognize my name along with that of my husband, Jack, as co-authors of recent articles about "acts of genealogical kindness". When I accepted our editor's invitation to join the "*Chronicles*" editing team, I did not anticipate being immediately asked to pen this column. I hope in a future issue to give an account of the longest and most far reaching journey that Jack and I have taken along with a family whose "kindness" request appeared in these pages in 2011. However, that story is still unfolding.

What initially was to be a way for us to pass along the kindness shown to us by JGSGP members and others as we conducted our personal research has become rewarding in its own right. We have also branched beyond the requests that appear in other newsletters and on JewishGen. In some cases, we have found information leading the researcher to conclude that while the names may be the same, they need to continue their search in a different geographic area. Although we have not always found the information or hoped for connections sought, our searches have given researchers access to local sources not yet available online and have saved them valuable time.

Jack and I have wrestled with privacy and ethical concerns. We decided that if we identify what we believe to be a local connection to a living person, we would then send a letter to that person, describing the original request and why we believe they may be connected. We always provide our return address and a phone number to give them the option of responding. Of course, positive connections are highly reinforcing for us.

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IN THE BEGINNING

by Steve Schecter

Why attend an International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) annual conference, especially if you are a beginner? The fact that you are a beginner is exactly the reason to go to a conference. Where else can you find so many knowledgeable Jewish genealogical brains to pick in one spot!

The conference brings together about 1,000 Jewish genealogists from around the globe. Presenters are drawn from experts who are thoughtful speakers on a wide variety of topics. Surprisingly, even the newest beginner will pick up helpful information and pointers while listening to the presentations. In addition there are "Birds of a Feather" or BOF gatherings where people with similar interests gather informally to share ideas and offer help. Conferences also have a resource center to do research and a vendor area to see new and engaging Jewish genealogy products.

Best of all there is plenty of *schmooze* time. This can be done in the resource center while conducting research, getting a document translated, or buying someone a cup of coffee. Coffee? Yep, coffee cup conversations are a most valuable part of a conference. This is also how we meet with relatives and potential relatives to share information. There is something special about chatting informally over food, coffee or tea. Personally, I've been able to gather critical information, learn techniques, and develop invaluable resource networks through these casual conversations. Information is shared that would have taken months of frustration to uncover. It is amazing how just by offering to fill a cup and asking lots of "dumb" questions, how many people are willing to patiently explain and help you learn. Attending an international conference, especially one in our backyard of Boston, is an awesome opportunity to accelerate your learning.

I hope to see you in Boston. I'll be looking for folks to sit and share over a cup of java. One final tidbit... remember to bring a thumb/flash drive to copy documents and other interesting stuff.

For more info, check out: <http://www.iajgs2013.org/> ❖

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.

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A BRIEF LOOK AT COMPUTER DATA BACKUP

by James Gross

Losing such items as data files, video files, or digital photos will give us genealogists severe aggravation and anxiety. Computers can crash or stop working for a multitude of reasons including events such as power spikes, floods, or hardware failures. Unfortunately, users rarely have advanced warning before their computers crash or stop working. In my opinion, it is very important for computer users to develop a plan for the periodic back-up of their essential data.

The analyst firm, The Diffusion Group or TDG, conducted an industry study on digital media data loss in 2006. Findings from this report included:

- (a) 40 - 50% of all backups are not fully recoverable, and up to 60% of all backups fail in general;
- (b) Nearly three out of five personal computer users have lost an electronic file they thought they had sufficiently stored;
- (c) a A hard drive crashes every 15 seconds;
- (d) 31% of PC users have lost all of their PC files to events beyond their control;
- (e) 25% of lost data is due to the failure of a portable drive;
- (f) a 44% of data loss is caused by mechanical [computer] failures ⁽¹⁾.

This study suggests spending some time and thought into putting together a usable plan for periodic data backup.

Noted genealogist Dick Eastman posted in his May 7, 2006 column:

“Computer malfunctions can destroy your data at any time without warning. . . Having a recent backup available is the best way to recover from both manmade and other file losses. Computer experts will also tell you to store backup copies of your files “off site” to protect them from major catastrophes, such as fire, flood, tornado, hurricane, or other damage that can destroy computers and backups alike.” ⁽²⁾

Consider some of the following options for backing up your data: (Note: even automatic backup software systems are fallible.)

1. If you have a larger desktop computer, you can install a second internal hard drive, a backup copy, typically referred to as the D drive. On three occasions my main hard drive, or C drive, was damaged or contained a virus. Having

a D drive gave me flexibility and a defensive option

2. An external, portable hard drive can be utilized as a tool for a backup copy by simply attaching it to a USB plug and then copying selected folders and files.

3. Copying or burning data files to a CD or DVD. As long as you store the CD or DVD in a plastic or paper storage envelope, the disk should be reasonably secure from becoming scratched and/or unreadable.

4. Another option for both desktops and laptops is an online storage method called “cloud storage which can be purchased through several online companies. I would suggest that you research this to compare costs and options. There may be a monthly fee depending on amount of space needed. In my opinion this should not be the sole method of data backup.

Regardless of your data backup storage choice, be aware that unless you feel it is necessary, you may not need to back up your entire computer. Most of us are focused on saving essential data and personal files. The operating system and other programs can usually be reloaded.

Regardless of your method of data backup, experts generally agree on the following steps:

- (a) Take an inventory of what data (and folders) need to be backed up and how often backups should be performed,
- (b) Select a backup method that works for you,
- (c) Try not to put off backing up your data.
- (d) Review how you are securing paper documents and photos. Try to ensure that they are housed in archival acid-free and waterproof containers ⁽³⁾

In summary, there does not appear to be a “perfect” method or plan for data backup. Experts seem to agree that secure data backup is essential to preserve one’s data. Data backup depends on the user’s willingness to create or utilize a backup plan. This can be as simple as deciding on one or more formats for backup storage. I personally would recommend burning essential folders to a DVD as well as using a portable or backup hard drive. Together they will give the user two copies of backed up data. ❖

References:

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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/grosssteinberg> He can be reached at: navistar96@yahoo.com

BRUCHA BOBROW NEIDICH DURING WORLD WAR I

by Susan Neidich

When I was about twelve years old I asked my paternal grandmother about her life in Europe. She responded, “It was bad; you don’t need to know about it.”, essentially ending the conversation. I never doubted that the first part of her response was true, but I have always disagreed with her latter point. Decades later, I finally got around to investigating what I knew about her life during World War I and her immigration to the United States.

The story which my father related to me from childhood onwards went as follows: When World War I began in August 1914, my paternal grandfather, Gad Asher Neidich, was living in the Bronx, New York, while my paternal grandmother, Brucha Bobrow Neidich was living with their four young children in Pinsk, (then part of the Russian Empire, today part of Belarus).

Brucha dug trenches for the German army during the war. In 1916 she was living in Poltusk, north of Warsaw with her children. Her oldest son, Jack, (Yankel) almost died of starvation during the war and was hospitalized for malnutrition in Warsaw. The family traveled on a “sealed train” from Poland (which was German occupied Russian territory at the time) through Germany to the free port of Rotterdam in order to take the Holland American Line ship, the Potsdam, to the United States, arriving in early 1917. During their reunion, after seven years of separation, my grandmother became pregnant with my father, Hyman (Chaim).

Around 1990 I expressed skepticism to my father regarding his mother’s digging trenches for the German army and asked how he knew that. He responded that there were pic-