

# Getting Your Genealogy Clutter under Control

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By Marilyn Thomsen

*How can we stay organized as we accumulate more documents but have less space?*

1. **Set aside several blocks of time to unclutter.** Make it a priority. The long term benefit will help you and those who inherit your files and artifacts.
2. **Start by purging the excessive papers.**
3. **Digitize, digitize, digitize.** If it is worth keeping, it is worth sharing. Digitized documents make it easier to do both. COST: Free
  - Small number of items can be done at home or at the Family History Center or Library
  - Large number of photos, slides, books or documents go to BYU Family History Library
    - Free. See BYU's high speed scanners online:  
<http://guides.lib.byu.edu/content.php?pid=46986&sid=372141>
    - OCR (Optical character recognition) turns typewritten documents into editable, formatted text for use in word processing, desktop publishing and other software.
    - Imagine searching for a surname in obituary when you convert your paper files to searchable PDFs.
4. **Set up a system**
  - Have a good system to prevent paper piles and lost papers
    1. [In a Pile or a File](http://www.timeforitnow.com/genealogy/book/preface) ><http://www.timeforitnow.com/genealogy/book/preface>< is an online booklet with research examples by Rita F. Bartholomew of ideas for organizing paper files.
    2. Professional genealogist Karen Clifford provides free lessons on her [website](http://www.fileyourpapers.com/lessons.html) ><http://www.fileyourpapers.com/lessons.html>< on organizing your paper files for PAF, Ancestral Quest, Legacy Family Tree and My Trees Online users.
    3. Kimberly Powell of [About.com](http://genealogy.about.com) >[http://genealogy.about.com/od/organization/Organization\\_for\\_Genealogists.htm](http://genealogy.about.com/od/organization/Organization_for_Genealogists.htm)< provides organizing for paper files, digital files and even bookmarks.
    4. Geneablogger Elyse Doerflinger has a video and eBook entitled *Conquering the Paper Monster* that you can purchase from her [blog](http://elysesgenealogyblog.com/announcing-conquering-the-paper-monster-video-lecture) ><http://elysesgenealogyblog.com/announcing-conquering-the-paper-monster-video-lecture><
    5. Organization systems are described at [https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Organizing\\_Your\\_Files](https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Organizing_Your_Files)
  - Supplies are important for good organization:
    - Go online to find what you want, have delivered next day for orders over \$50.
    - [www.officemax.com](http://www.officemax.com) or [www.stapes.com](http://www.stapes.com) for file storage solutions
5. **Print Less**
  - a. **Why print?** Just view it on computer screen?
    - Save censuses or other documents as jpeg or pdf files. If the website doesn't save (Google books) use Prnt Scrn to paste into a word processing document or a photo editing program (Irfanview).

## Purge Your Papers Guidelines

### ASK YOUR SELF:

- a. Could this item be a historical document in the future?
- b. Will the future genealogists find this piece of paper valuable to our family history?
- c. Would it be hard to get another copy of this document if I should need it again?

**IF YES to all above KEEP it.**

**IF NO to all above TOSS it.**

- Need to Circle, comment and line documents up? Paste into document, or One Note to create this will save your comments in your file.
- Printing reports (those needing temple work etc.) from your genealogical data program? Save as a text or PDF file.

## 6. Backup, backup, backup

- Automated online service such as Mozy <mozy.com> is ideal.
- Regularly save copies of file to external hard drive or burn CD's or DVDs
- Email share copies with family (off site)

BYU and Mapleton Family History Center have the Millenniata DVD burner.  
<http://www.olsondatamax.com/products-and-services/>

## 7. Lighten Your Library

- i. Journal subscriptions – go digital. Donate old journals to Library.
- ii. Conference Syllabus –go CD's
- iii. Magazines
  - Digitalize the articles (with that list of websites you want to get to) and throw away the magazine.
  - Purchase back issues on CD
  - Online versions have PDF format
- iv. Books--look for digital versions of favorites to store in your computer and online

## 8. Work the web

- a. Look for digitalized rare and out of print books online and then donate your copy to library
- b. Genealogical References
  - i. Toss your research FamilySearch *Research Guides*. Use [wiki.familysearch.org](http://wiki.familysearch.org).
  - ii. Save favorite articles to a file in your computer.
  - iii. Book mark research help sites

### Online books

*Google books* <[books.google.com](http://books.google.com)>  
*BYU Family History Archive*  
[www.lib.byu.edu/fhc](http://www.lib.byu.edu/fhc)  
*HeritageQuest* through the Orem Library Book archive  
*Ancestry.com* and World Vital Records  
[www.worldvitalrecords.com](http://www.worldvitalrecords.com)

## 9. Find the right fit

### a. Family Heirloom storage

- i. Difficult sizes, delicate condition create clutter
- ii. Buy online acid- and lignin-free boxes for photographs, negatives, artwork, flags, rare books and textiles, as well as scrapbooks for newspapers.
- iii. Archival storage products protect, organize and help line up on shelves
  - Utah Historical society & BYU Library can help with conservatory advice.
- iv. File your photos—you guessed it—by surname, same as your paper files.
  1. Label the backs of the prints using a special photo-labeling pencil.
  2. If you opt for albums, don't worry about fancy decorations right now. Just use photo corners and caption each image with names, dates and everything else you know about it.

### Archival Storage Supplies

1. <[Hollingermetaledge.com](http://Hollingermetaledge.com)>
2. <[www.gaylord.com](http://www.gaylord.com)>
3. <[www.lightimpressionsdirect.com](http://www.lightimpressionsdirect.com)>
4. <[www.universityproducts.com](http://www.universityproducts.com)>

## 10. Keep Computer Clutter under Control

- i. To stay organized, commit to finish the paperwork and filing BEFORE the next search begins.
- ii. Photo organizing programs such as Picasa – free from Google.com- can keep photos at your fingertips
- iii. Use a word processor table or excel file to track the location of books, photo

### List of Sources:

Carmack, Sharon DeBartolo . *Organizing Your Family History Search*, Cincinnati: Betterway Books, 1999.  
 Crume, Rick, *Wide Open Spaces*, Family Tree Magazine, Nov 2010