

When It Takes a Village: Applying Cluster and Collateral Research Techniques

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Abstract: Sometimes tracking one's ancestors tests all one's research acumen. Identifying subject ancestors, their origins, and parentage; tracking them through time and space; and constructing biographies to place them in their social context is best approached by broadening one's research to include family members, associates and neighbors. This presentation will outline a program for solving genealogical problems via cluster and collateral research techniques. Topics will include: appropriate application, commonly used resources and documents, and case studies successfully tracking individuals despite seemingly meager clues, overcoming name and residential changes and using DNA evidence.



What is Cluster Research?

It is the technique of broadening our research to include people beyond direct line ancestors. One researches and includes ancestors' siblings, aunts and uncles, cousins, spouses and other family members, friends, neighbors and acquaintances.

Why Cluster research?

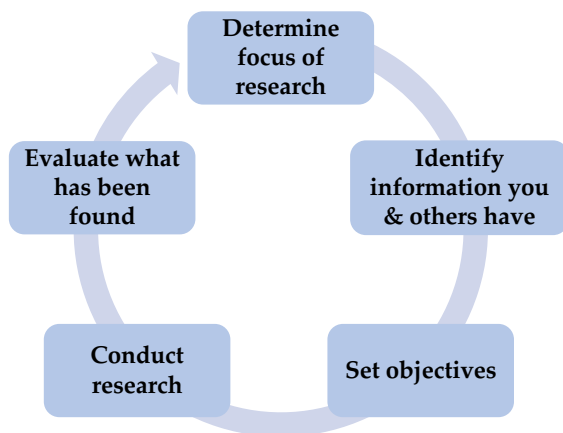
- Identify the correct individuals in records;
- Provide records and information perhaps not left by one's ancestor;
- Additional support for accurate research conclusions;
- Understand the context of our ancestors' lives.

Additional Benefits of Cluster Research

- Neighbors may actually be relatives;
- Help with brick wall problems;
- Broadening one's perspective on our ancestors' lives;
- Understand geographical origins and migration patterns;
- May be the most effective and efficient method of following your ancestors.



Research Process



- Document what you know with a time line, map and/or family group sheet
- Document the FAN club (Family, Friends, Associates and Neighbors)
- Ask who, what when, where and how questions
- Correlate evidence
- Challenge assumptions

Things to consider along the way:

- ID others on records (witnesses, lodgers, those left behind, neighbors, etc.)
- Exhaustively research FAN club members
- Squeeze records until they hurt!
- Evaluate intensity of interactions:
 - Frequency – often/occasionally/once
 - Diversity – multiple kinds of contacts/interactions
- With DNA analyses, understand genetic relationships among known relatives before comparing them with unknown.

Tools to track research and do analyses:

- Research log – choose format that works for you and your research question(s)
 - Blog
 - Table
 - Report
- Family tree programs on your computer
 - Link facts to information in records (citations and images)
 - OK to put unattached people (islands) into your tree
- Spread sheets (or tables)
 - Time lines
 - Comparison of data among individuals
- Maps

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FANs who helped flesh out the Feiga Grinfeld's family tree

Yitzhak Leib														
Mordechai														
Avraham Abba GARBER							Levi Yitzhak LEDERMAN			GRINFELD		ALBERT		LEVISON
Nathan	Max	Jack		Feiga	Aron		Morris	Feiga	Shachna	Harry	Charles	Flora	Sophia	Isadore
	Mildred	Bernie	Leah	Anita	MG	AS	SL	Ray & Leah						
	FF	JG	Emily	LE	BM	ES								
								Paper records used					DNA results	

Avraham Aba
 Levi Yitzhak
 Nathan
 Max
 Feiga Garber
 Aron
 Morris
 Ray
 Leah
 Harry
 Charles
 Flora
 Sophia
 Isadore
Feiga Grinfeld

FF
 JG
 Emily
 LE
 BM
 ES
 MG
 AS
 SL