

Tracing pasts: Guide to online networking will be valuable

May 20, 2009 03:14:00 PM

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A few columns ago, I wrote about the online social networking site Facebook and some ideas on how it could benefit a genealogist. I recently learned (from a post on Facebook!) that my friend Drew Smith had gone even farther and written a book on the topic.

"Social Networking for Genealogists," published this year by the Genealogical Publishing Company, is a terrific guide to making the most of a wide selection of online resources. To quote from the back cover, "This book describes the wide array of social networking services that are now available online and highlights how these services can be used by genealogists to share information, photos, and videos with family, friends, and other researchers. Each chapter guides you through a unique category of social networking services using genealogy-related examples."

The second chapter gives the best explanation I've seen for exactly what an RSS feed is and how to set one up so you can receive a message when a Web site you like is updated. This makes it much easier to keep up with these sites as new information is added. I don't have time to check sites one at a time every day looking for additions, nor do most other researchers. Using an RSS feed will make keeping current much easier.

The chapter "Collaborative Editing" describes how to set up a system so that multiple researchers can work on a document at the same time. Instead of the old way of e-mailing a manuscript back and forth, we can now work together online on family histories or articles or anything we want to write. This can save a lot of time and easily involve several researchers on a project.

Other chapters cover message boards, mailing lists, wikis, podcasts, photo and video sharing and other topics, all geared toward use by genealogists. Drew gives clear examples and lots of illustrations to help you use all the applications he describes. Each chapter ends with a list of steps you can take to get involved with the technology he has described.

This is a great book to shelve near your computer as a quick and easy reference guide.

You can use a copy of "Social Networking for Genealogists" in the Genealogy Room of the Bay County Public Library. It is located at Gen R 929.109 SMI. If you'd like to buy a copy for your personal library, it sells for \$18.95 plus shipping and can be ordered from the publisher at www.genealogical.com

I know this will be a book I refer to often. If you are interested in using the Internet as a tool to help your research in newer ways, you might want to keep a copy close by as well.