
A Lasting Legacy in the Digital Age

This handout captures the key concepts from the Family History Month Opening Address, integrating practical advice with visual highlights from the presentation. It is designed to help you reflect on your role as both custodian and steward of your family's history in a digital world.

Custodianship & Stewardship

Together, they define our responsibilities as family historians in the digital age.



CUSTODIANSHIP

Honours the past
Holds story with care
Embodied & inherited



STEWARDSHIP

Plans for the future
Ensures its accessibility
Practical & intentional

We are the custodians of story, the stewards of memory.

Family Heirlooms of a Different Kind

We often inherit a mix of family history materials—suitcases of notes, web printouts, letters, and cassette tapes. They may be disorganised, but they're full of potential. As stewards, we must bring structure and clarity to them.

Digital Fragility: The Problem of Obsolete Formats

- Legacy formats like floppy disks, CDs, and cassettes can lock away important information.
- If you can't open it, you can't preserve it—update your formats and access tools regularly.

**When
Legacy Is
Locked
Away**



Digitisation ≠ Indexing

- Digitisation creates a digital image of an item (e.g., scan or photo).
- Indexing turns that image into searchable, structured data.
- Both are needed for true preservation and future usability.



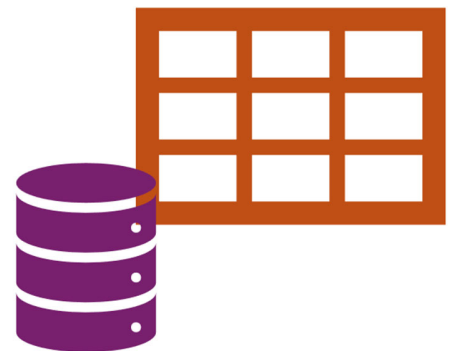
DIGITISATION



INDEXING

Structured Data, Sustainable Practice

- Use spreadsheets with discrete fields:
eg Surname | Given Name | Event | Year | Place
- Avoid unstructured Word documents or freeform text.
- Consistency supports searching, sorting, and sharing.



Working Files vs Legacy Files

- Your working files may be messy or experimental.
- Legacy files should be clean, labelled, and documented.
- Ask yourself: If you were gone tomorrow, could someone else make sense of your work?

From Community Rooms to Digital Collaboration

- Indexing from the Cloud
- Use of Google Sheets, Airtable & other cloud-based tools
- Consider remote indexing teams
- Training & inclusivity benefits

DIGI**VOL**



eHive



 **recollect**



Ironclad Sisterhood

CONVICT WOMEN IN AUSTRALIA

ORIGINAL RESEARCH BY JESS HILL, HELD AT THE SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIAN GENEALOGISTS





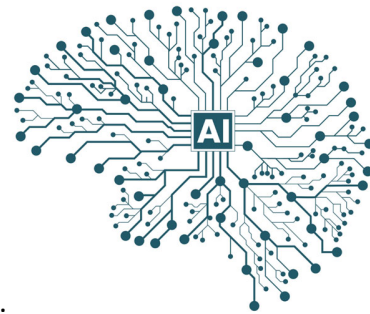
DNA: A Modern Heirloom

- DNA as both record and relationship
 - A gift to future researchers
 - A source that can reshape family stories
- Ethical custodianship
 - Consent and privacy
 - Respecting the rights of the living and the dead
- Stewardship responsibilities
 - Keeping test results accessible
 - Leaving clear notes for future family historians: what test, where, and why
 - Explaining how to access your DNA accounts or results

DNA and AI: Enhancing, Not Replacing

AI: A New Helper

- Transcription
- Indexing
- Translation
- Error checking
- Setting up indexing projects
- AI should always support, not replace, the human researcher.



Stewarding the Digital Archive



File naming
conventions



Clear folder
structures



Backups &
migration



Metadata as a
gift to the future

- Use clear file naming conventions and create clean folder structures.
- Maintain backups and plan for digital migration.
- Add metadata to explain the context and meaning of files.
- Document your logic so others can follow your work.

Small Steps, Big Impact – What You Can Do This Month

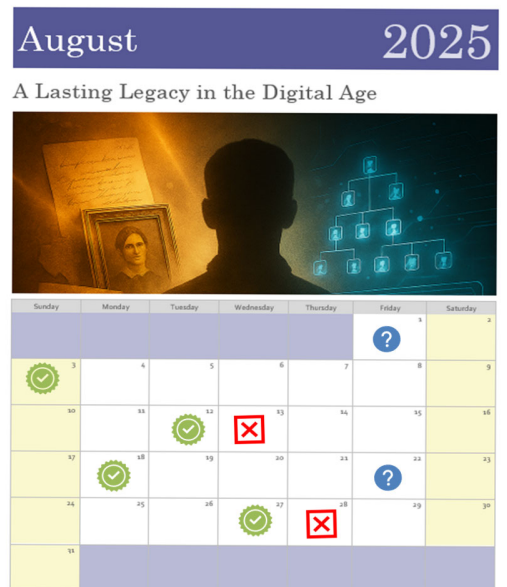
- Audit your old media (disks, tapes, files).
- Convert one item to a current format.
- Start or revise a spreadsheet index.
- Rename files for clarity.
- Share your system with someone new.

Legacy as a Living Gift

- It Doesn't End With Us
- Others will build on what we preserve
- Legacy is ongoing, collaborative, imperfect
- Encourage openness and documentation

Useful Links

- National Library of Australia – Trove: <https://trove.nla.gov.au>
- Digital Preservation Coalition: <https://www.dpconline.org>
- FamilySearch Indexing: <https://www.familysearch.org/indexing/>
- Oral History Australia: <https://oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/>
- MyHeritage Knowledge Base: <https://education.myheritage.com/>
- Māori Data Sovereignty Network: <https://www.maoridatasovereignty.org/>
- Digivol: <https://volunteer.ala.org.au/>
- eHive: <https://ehive.com/>
- Omeka: <https://www.omeka.net/>
- Recollect: <https://www.recollectcms.com/>
- Zooniverse: <https://www.zooniverse.org/>
- From the Page: <https://www.fromthepage.com/landing>
- Ironclad Sisterhood: <https://ironcladsisterhood.sag.org.au/>



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