

GS2318-F Top 10 Tools to Avoid Tech Overload

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Do you have a technology tummy ache? Too much of a good thing can make you sick – or at least sick and tired of navigating the countless tech tools available out there. The good news is that you don't need them all to accomplish your genealogy goals. In most cases, just one will do. Ah, but which one you ask? Soothe your suffering by simply focusing on these top 10 technology tools that will help you bypass tech overload and get back to your genealogy research. (Note: ***tech changes fast***. Check websites for current pricing, etc.)

1. Online Search: Google (www.google.com)

There are very good reasons why Google reigns as the Search King. First is its search architecture called Caffeine, which features continual index updating for fresher results. It also packs a wide range of free innovative tools particularly advantageous to genealogists such as Google Patents, Google Books, Google News Archive, Google Scholar, and Google Earth Pro. To broaden or narrow your search, it uses search operators such as:

- “Charles A. Burkett” (Quotation marks retrieve exact words or phrases)
- “Charles * Burkett” (Asterisk allows for an initial or a word between words)
- -Abraham (a minus sign / dash subtracts unwanted keyword)

Finally, you can put Google to work for you by automating your searches with Google Alerts (www.google.com/alerts). Sign up for a free google account, run your favorite genealogical search, and then copy and paste your query into Google Alerts. Select your delivery preferences, and Google will automatically run the search for you 24 hours a day, emailing relevant results when found to your email address.

2. Mobile Genealogy: Tablet

Mobile is the fastest growing computing segment according to data compiled on the website Super Monitoring (www.supermonitoring.com). In 2014 we passed the mobile “tipping point” where mobile has overtaken desktop computer usage. This trend will progress as Cloud Computing continues to firmly entrench itself, and users continue to untether themselves from their desktop computers. Whether you have a smartphone or a tablet (or both) a mobile device keeps your load light and your research flexible. My fav: The iPad Air. Lighter than ever and sporting the iOS operating system, the iPad Air is a great solution for genealogy on the road. Prefer Android? Check out CNET’s run down of the top Android tablets at www.cnet.com/news/best-pure-android-tablets/. Whatever you choose, your mobile device will be an integral part of your tech savvy family history endeavors.

Fun Apple Device Trick: “Undo” whatever you did by shaking your iPad or iPhone (hang on tight!)

3. Research Note Taking: Evernote (www.evernote.com)

While there are a variety of note taking programs on the market, Evernote is leading the pack. Evernote makes managing, organizing, and retrieving those notes a snap. And unlike OneNote, which is only one of Microsoft’s many tools, Evernote is all that Evernote.com does. As a cloud based solution, Evernote stores a master of each of your notes on their servers, and then keeps them updated on all of your computing devices with an Internet connection. This makes sharing notes with other researchers a breeze because each cloud based note sports its own unique web address. Simply copy and paste the note’s address into an email, document, or online to share and collaborate.

Start by downloading the free software from the Evernote website. Evernote will detect whether you are on a

PC or Mac and deliver up the right version for you. While there, download the web clipper to your favorite browser to make web clipping a snap. Finally, download the free app from your app store. Now you are ready to take notes of every kind imaginable: text, audio, video, attached documents, web clippings, even handwritten.

TIP: Download the free Dolphin browser app (www.dolphin.com) The Evernote web clipper is built in.

4. Storage, file transfer and sharing: Dropbox (www.dropbox.com)

With all the mobile computing you do, you'll need an easy and preferably free way to grab the files you need regardless of which device you are working on. That's where Dropbox comes in. It provides you with cloud based storage that can easily synchronize your digital files between your computers, smartphones, and tablets. Dropbox is a favorite among genealogists for several reasons, the biggest being that it is one of the easiest cloud storage services to use. Get started by signing up for the free service at their website and you'll get 2 GB of storage free. Dropbox is one of the few storage services that offers you an easy way to add additional free storage through referrals to your friends and family. Upload file size limit: 10GB. (Dropbox Pro as of this writing is \$9.99 for 1TB. Check the website for current pricing.) Another reason genealogists love Dropbox is its flexibility. Dropbox works equally well on PCs and Macs, Android and iOS, and the Kindle Fire. Dropbox also secures your files with 256-bit AES encryption and two-step verification.

5. Remote Access for Mobile Devices: Splashtop 2 Personal (www.splashtop.com)

No matter how awesome your tablet or smartphone is, there are times where you just need the power of a desktop computer. Splashtop Remote provides mobile remote access to your computer. Start by downloading the Desktop Streamer from the Splashtop website (www.splashtop.com) and leave your computer running (sleep mode is fine). Then head to the app store on your mobile device (Splashtop supports Windows, Mac, iOS, Android, and webOS) and download the low cost app. Next, launch the Splashtop 2 Personal app on your mobile device. You'll see a screen but there will not be any Streamers (computers) listed yet. Tap the Settings (gear) icon and click "Create an account." Enter your email address, and then enter a password in the Password and Confirm password fields, being sure to follow the password guidelines. Connect your mobile device and Streamer to the Internet at least once in order to log in to your account on both devices. You will then be able to connect your iPad to your Streamer within a local network. You will need the low cost Anywhere Access Pack (AAP) in order to connect your mobile device to your computer from a different network when you're away from home, such a library, archive, or other remote location. Once you've experienced the power of remote access, you'll never want to leave home without it.

6. Online Backup: Back Blaze (www.backblaze.com/Lisa)

With so much of our precious family history stored on our computer, automated backup is essential. The good news is that we no longer have to remember to back up our data onto a portable hard drive at the end of the month. Online backup services allow you to set up your backup, and forget it. The not so good news is that there are so many to choose from. Though many can fit the bill, Backblaze consistently comes out on top.

The strengths of Backblaze's service include support for Windows and Mac OS X users, unlimited storage space, unlimited file types (even video which many other services don't automatically include) and no file size limit. Users' data can be backed up automatically when the computer is idle, on an hourly schedule, or continuously. AES encryption is used to ensure security. In the unfortunate case of a loss of files due to a hard drive crash or other calamity, files can be restored and delivered in the form of a digital download, on an external USB hard drive up to 3TB, or a USB flash drive up to 128GB. (Check their website for the most current information.) A free 30 day trial makes getting started easy, and then it runs about \$5.00 a month. The newest Backblaze offering is their free iPhone app, which makes it easy to download your backed up computer files to your iPhone. Simply sign into the iPhone application and you can select the photos, music, or documents you want to download.

7. Library Online and Offline Search: WorldCat (www.worldcat.org)

When libraries came online it was a huge boon to genealogists. We can prepare in detail for our visits, ensuring that we make the best use of our time. However, when we are trying to determine where a particular book or resource is held, things get a little more complicated. With over an estimated 120,096 libraries of all kinds in the United States, that's a lot of websites to visit.

WorldCat is said to be the world's largest bibliographic database originating from a catalog that was created in the early 1970s. 72,000 libraries in 170 countries and territories contribute their collections to the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) global cooperative. It now contains more than 300 million records, representing over 2 billion physical and digital assets in more than 470 languages. This immense online bibliographic footprint makes it the perfect place to start every library search.

Though you can use WorldCat without signing up for a free account, there are advantages to doing so. Account holders can create research lists, make notes on individual items, create bibliographies, and write reviews. To get started, sign up for a free account and then run a keyword, author, or title search, or click the Advanced Search link for more help with constructing your query. After running the search you will receive a list of results. Click on a title, and then scroll down to the "Find a Copy in the Library" section where you can enter your zip code. The results will be presented to you in order of their proximity to your home, saving you time and gas money. If all that hasn't convinced you that WorldCat is the ideal starting point for all library searches, then how about this: The FamilySearch Catalog is searchable on WorldCat!

8. Consuming Online Content: Feedly (www.feedly.com)

Run a search on "genealogy" in Blog Search Engine at www.blogsearchengine.org and you'll receive well over 5,000,000 results. Talk about overload! But there's a lot of great up to the minute content out there that can assist your research and nurture your on-going genealogical education. There's an easy way to consume just the online content you want: Feedly. Feedly is a free online content aggregator application for Web browsers and mobile devices (iOS and Android) as well as a cloud-based service. Aggregators allow you to pull together the content providers you select. When those providers publish new content (blog, podcast, video) on the web, it is automatically sent to your Feedly account. That way, rather than having to hunt down bookmarked websites and go look for what's new, the latest content comes to you.

Feedly's strength is its super easy-to-use interface that makes adding and organizing content a breeze. There are a few ways to add items to Feedly. You can search for keywords and / or websites in the search box, click a selection from the results, and then click the green +feedly button. If you find yourself on a website you like and you want to add it to Feedly, look for a link or an orange RSS button on the site and see if they offer an "add to Feedly" button. If they don't, but you have the RSS feed URL address (this is the address that allows you to subscribe to a website) for the site, just copy it and paste it into Feedly's search box.

Feedly Tip: You can add easily YouTube channels to Feedly. Just copy the channel's home page URL address and paste it into the Feedly search box. Before you hit the enter key, add /feed to the end of the address.

Organize your feeds by category such as libraries, archives, research locations, surnames, etc. Go a step further in diminishing overload by setting up a "Priority" category that includes your list of "must read" items. You can also choose how your feeds will be displayed by title, magazine or cards. This allows for quick scanning of post titles and usually includes a "snippet" view of the first few words, making it possible to very quickly decide which items to spend your time consuming.

9. Social Media Management: Hootsuite (www.hootsuite.com)

Many genealogists have turned to social media to connect with other genealogists across the nation and around the world. Sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ offer instant access to the collective genealogical brain trust. But all those tweet and posts can flood your computer quickly, drowning useful information in a sea of online noise. Before you decide to give up social media, try a social media management tool like Hootsuite.

From one convenient dashboard on the Hootsuite website you can monitor online conversations, send Tweets and Facebook posts now, or schedule them for future publication. Why would you want to schedule a post in the future? How about setting up the next three months of information distribution and reminders for your next family reunion in one sitting? Or automating your society's news and calendar events? And genealogy bloggers can get an entire week or month of blog posts set up for publication in a fraction of the time it would take to log in and get their message out one at a time. Think of Hootsuite as Grand Central Station for your social media life.

To get started follow this simple game plan:

1. Sign Up for your free Hootsuite account
2. Add the social networks you participate in such as Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, foursquare, etc.
3. Add Tabs and Streams which allow you to perform and save advanced searches, filter for content, and manage lists and followers
4. Compose and send your messages
5. Install Apps found in the App Directory, a library of third-party apps (free and paid) to further customize your dashboard.
6. Download the free Hootsuite app for your mobile device (iPhone, iPad, and Android). Hootsuite's beta mobile web app <m.hootsuite.com> is also available for iOS, Android, Blackberry, or Windows.

10. Video: YouTube (www.youtube.com)

It is said that over 100 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube alone every minute. It's no wonder that the world of video can get overwhelming pretty fast. But, don't shy away from YouTube because much of those uploads include old home movies, vintage newsreels, family stories, and other film footage that could impact your family tree. If you have a free Google account, then you are already on your way to managing this video treasure trove. Head to www.youtube.com and sign in, or sign up there if you don't have an account. Once you are signed in, there is an array of powerful tools to help you quickly zero in on applicable film footage.

The YouTube search box is powered by Google, so the same search operators you use with Google can be used at YouTube. Your account includes your own YouTube channel and the Creator Studio. This is where you can create and upload your own videos, as well as view videos from channels you subscribe to, and create and view playlists customized to your interests. (Visit my YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/genealogygems)

TIP: Search YouTube Search for the items related to your family history such as ancestral locations and timeframes, genealogical answers, genealogy expert interviews, surnames, and how-to information.

Resources:

Video: *10 Tech Tools You Can't Live Without*. Included in Genealogy Gems Premium Membership at www.genealogygems.com.

FREE Cheat Sheet: *5 Fabulous Google Search Strategies for the Family Historian*. Free with Genealogy Gems e-newsletter sign up at www.genealogygems.com.

