

Family History Takes Place: Geography and Genealogy

Presented by: Dan Shellman and Dan Reeves

All family history events happened at a particular place and a particular time. Coming to know these places – and how they were at the particular time in question – can greatly improve our efforts to learn and describe family history. Although a number of challenges complicate the study and effective use of geography in family history, many exciting opportunities await those willing to invest in the pursuit.

This presentation explores challenges and opportunities dealing with places in family history at three distinct levels:

- 1) Personal research
- 2) Applications and services
- 3) The family history industry as a whole.

Personal research

Challenges

- Name changes
- Jurisdictional changes
- Proximity vs. jurisdiction

Opportunities

- Knowledge of places can lead to additional discoveries
- History of a place is a history of people

Applications and services

Challenges

- Politically/culturally sensitive places
- Lack of a standard

Opportunities

- Searchability and linking records with people
- Visualization of people/records on a map
- Record research: where are records stored?

Industry

Challenges

- Data sharing

Opportunities

- Application features
- Common standard vs. federated standard
- Collaboration – patrons communicating across applications

Notes:

Resources:

FamilySearch Place Research Tool: <http://familysearch.org/int-std-ui-research/>

US Board on Geographic Names: <http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/index.html>

USGS Historical Topographic Map Explorer: <http://historicalmaps.arcgis.com/usgs/>

A Vision of Britain through Time: <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/>

Historical maps of the Austria-Hungary Empire: <http://mapire.eu/en/>