Learning from e-Family History:

Online Research Behaviour and Strategies of Family Historians

and implications for Local Studies Collections

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*I'm playing all the **right** notes. But, not necessarily in the right order.*

Eric Morecambe

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ABSTRACT

The massive expansion of electronic resources has been identified as one of the major drivers behind the 'explosion' in the popularity of family history, which bring ease, convenience and accessibility to some parts of the research process. Amongst this expanse of easily-accessible raw materials, online local studies materials (recording both historical and contemporary aspects of a community) can add real context and value to researchers' findings and experience; turning a genealogy into a family history. However, the vast majority of these do not appear visible to online family history researchers. Through three central foci (users, e-family history resources, and Local Studies Collections), this research investigates these resources and collections from the perspective of users, to establish how to make the added value of the local studies collections more visible and encourage increased engagement for those who cannot visit collections in person. Specific evaluative criteria for e-family history resources are presented, contributing to practitioners' awareness and understanding of their nature; in turn helping maintain their service quality to researchers. Using a hybrid (primarily ethnographic) research approach, the study also examines the online research behaviour of family historians, identifying a taxonomy of actions (seeking of genealogical facts, local or social history; communicating with other researchers or resources; locating resources or instructive information; managing own information), strategies (search modifications and incorporation of background knowledge) and outcomes (outcome; direction (projected and actual)). From these categories, a model of Family Historians' online information seeking has been developed. Researchers have both informational and affective needs, and are highly emotionally attached to the research process. Users universally used *Ancestry*, *FamilySearch*, *ScotlandsPeople*, and *Genes Reunited* far more than other sites, seeking out quality informational content and unique records, which must be successful for researchers. *Google* was a major method of access to these. Very few participants were pre-aware of 'e-local studies' websites, and were surprised by the variations in quality, inconsistencies in terminology and navigation, and invisibility of quality content. Despite a lack of ease of use, the content present on e-local studies sites and their usefulness and value had been demonstrated to researchers. This suggests significant demand for local information of this kind online where it is available and made known.

Keywords: e-family history; e-genealogy; online family history; electronic resources; local studies; online local studies materials; research behaviour; library websites

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A2A   Access 2 Archives

ALE   Ancestry Library Edition

ARCHON   Archives Online

ARIST   Annual Review of Information Science and Technology

BCG   Board of Certification for Genealogists

(BDM)   (Births, Deaths and Marriages)

BMD   Births, Marriages and Deaths

CILIP   Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals

COLLAGE   City of London Library and Art Gallery Electronic

CWGC   Commonwealth War Graves Commission

DCMS   Department of Culture, Media and Sport

EAD   Encoded Archival Description

EARL   Electronic Access to Resources in Libraries

ELIS   Everyday Life Information-Seeking

F2F   Face to face

FAQ   Frequently Asked Questions

FHS   Family History Societies

FS   FamilySearch

GEDCOM   GEnealogical Data COMmunication

GENUKI   Genealogy UK and Ireland

GF   Genealogical Fact

GR   Genes Reunited

GRO	General Register Office
GROS	General Register Office for Scotland
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
HTML	Hypertext Mark-up Language
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IGI	International Genealogical Index
IM	Instant Messaging
IP	Internet Protocol
IT	Information Technology
JISC	Joint Information Systems Committee
LA	Local Authority
LDS	Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
LEADERS	Linking EAD to Electronically Retrievable Sources
LIS	Library and Information Science
LSHP	Local Studies Home Page
MI	Monumental Inscriptions
MLA	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
MP	Member of Parliament
NA	National Archives (UK)
NAS	National Archives of Scotland
NLS	National Library of Scotland
NOAH	Norfolk Online Access to Heritage
OCR	Optical Character Recognition
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalogue
OPR	Old Parish Register
PDF	Portable Document Format

PERSI	PERiodical Source Index
PRO	Public Record Office (UK)
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RSS	Really Simple Syndication
RUSA	Reference and User Services Association
SAE	Stamped Addressed Envelope
SCAN	Scottish Archive Network
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation
SFHCP	Scottish Family History Centre Project
SN	Social Networking
SoG	Society of Genealogists
SP	ScotlandsPeople
SRO	Scottish Record Office
SSDI	Social Security Death Index
UKEIG	United Kingdom
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
UVF	Ulster Volunteer Force
VoIP	Voice over Internet Protocol
W3C	World Wide Web Consortium
WAI	Web Accessibility Initiative
WCAG	World Wide Web Consortium
WDYTYA?	Who Do You Think You Are?

The levels of interest in the online census demonstrate admirably that family history has ceased to be simply about a vague list of names and dates and has become more encompassing...amateur genealogists and library users want to find out much more about their ancestors than when they were born and when they died...but it is the plethora of other, often obscure, sources in local studies departments that provide a real insight into the souls of ancestors. (Reid 2003)

1.1   Introduction

The practices of genealogy and family history have been a popular pastime throughout most of the twentieth century and beyond. Using records held in libraries, archives, and other heritage institutions, researchers construct relationships, ancestral lines and family trees, and illustrate the lives of their ancestors, bringing lost memories back into remembrance. It is both intellectually and emotionally stimulating, with reportedly addictive qualities (6.1); "it became a puzzle I needed to solve: a very long, complicated, unending reference question" (Phelps 2003a). Equally, "it is hard to say exactly why the study of family history is such a rewarding hobby...[maybe] like our fingerprints, it is something that all people have but that is unique to each individual, and therefore anything that a family historian finds will be part of what makes them unique" (Gill 2007). Research undertaken is an unpredictable organic process occurring in real time, with an undetermined outcome and no guarantee of happy endings.

The history (or 'genealogy') of genealogy has been set out by many authors (Shown Mills 2003; Tucker 2006; Little 2007; Bishop 2003). Recorded as far back as Old Testament times, genealogy was common as an oral practice; it took on its modern form in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when "many genealogies were written from a desire to create a coherent kin identity and bolster leadership and power" (Little 2007); families wished to confirm links with (or bogusly link themselves to) nobility and gentry. Harvey (1992) considered that "a basic working definition of genealogy might be 'the historical study of relationships between individuals, and of families composed of related individuals'. Some

might confine genealogy to the narrower field...'an account of one's descent from an ancestor or ancestors, by enumeration of the intermediate persons'. Others take a broader view and attempt to place their accounts of family and individual relationships in a wider and historical social context". He notes that the latter is often termed 'family history', but that both are considered interchangeable. However, regardless of exactly how genealogy or family history is defined, "it will involve the study of individuals and their relationships with other individuals, and may require the study of any field of human activity", given the diversity found in each researcher's ancestry.

Fitzhugh (1998) similarly observes the synonymous nature of the terms, although now giving more distinction: "biographical research into one's forebears with the object of compiling a narrative history of the family...the term genealogy is reserved for the tracing of an ascent and the compilation of a family tree or ancestry chart. A family history should place members of the family in their historical, geographical, social and occupational contexts and describe their activities and the lives they lived". Family history is therefore so much more than genealogy, but this is not as clear cut as it may appear in some definitions, given that establishing at least part of a genealogy is the first step in family history research (Yakel 2004 and others). As Fitzhugh indicates, definitions and common terminology have moved on significantly during the course of this research (Reid 2003; Barratt 2009), from initially genealogy (and therefore e-genealogy) descriptions in the UK, and its prevalence in the American literature, to family history, now the more widely-used in the UK. Barratt further suggests movement towards 'Personal Heritage', which "combines the history of one's ancestors with the story of where they lived, worked and died, interlaced with the history of events in the local community". Many authors, even after defining the differences, still use the terms interchangeably (and to an extent this will happen here). In reality they are nested fields, as illustrated in Figure 1.1; the further outward a researcher explores, the greater the importance of community and local history within their work.
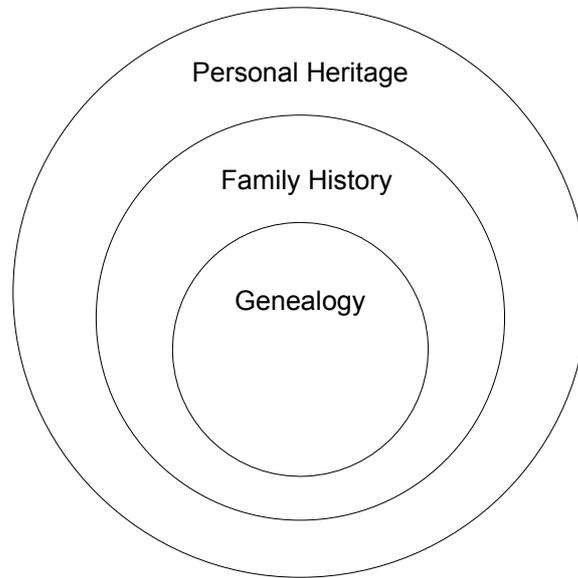
Figure 1.1: Nested Fields of Personal Heritage, Family History and Genealogy

Interest has been growing steadily in the hobby in recent years. Many recent UK observers cite the BBC series *Who Do You Think You Are?* (*WDYTYA?*) as a major stimulus. This programme follows various celebrities exploring their family trees, and subsequently examining the social history surrounding the story. The programme was not (at least initially) welcomed by all genealogists (particularly professionals), as the research process showed little of the legwork involved, and was presented as too easy (*Rootschat* 2004; *Talking Scot* 2006). It was widely exported and subsequently successfully spun-off to various countries, including Australia, Canada, Ireland, America, Norway (*Hvem tror du at du er?*) and Sweden (*Vem tror du att du är?*). "It examines the past through the eyes of the people who traditionally never make it into the textbooks...the emphasis on social history over family tree building, accompanied by actual document research...has had a profound effect on the way the viewing audience now treats history" (Barratt 2009). Series 2 attracted an average audience of 5.6 million viewers, compared to 4.7 million for Series 1 (double the viewers expected), and was the top programme on BBC2 in 2004 (Simor 2006). However, this more likely reflects a level of interest already inherent in the population: increasing with new ways of teaching local history (1.2). In the USA, much interest was stimulated by the television mini-series *Roots*[1] (Sinko and Peters 1983 and others). Aside from 'home'-based researchers, descendents of past emigrants expand the potential audience worldwide; for

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[1] *Roots* was a 1977 dramatisation of Alex Haley's novel *Roots: the Saga of an American family* (1976), based on his own African-American family history, which became one of the most popular American television shows of all time. Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011. *Alex Haley*. [online] Available from: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/252350/Alex-Haley [Accessed 16 July 2011]

example there are 5 million resident Scots, but over 30 million others worldwide (National Archives of Scotland 2003). UK residents began emigrating to North America in the late 16th century (as well as transportation in the 17th and 18th centuries); Scots moved in larger numbers following both the Act of Union in 1707, and the Battle of Culloden. This continued in great numbers until immigration controls were tightened in 1918. Although emigrants began arriving in the mid-17th century, Canada was a main destination for some 100,000 'British Home Children' between 1870 and the 1930s. Thousands were transported as convicts to Australia from the 18th century, with their families, and other "free settlers" such as farmers, seeking new challenges. Other destinations included New Zealand (from 1820); South Africa (from 1806); India; and the Caribbean to a lesser extent (familyrecords.gov.uk n.d.). Emigration from Ireland largely took place during and following the Great Famine (1845-1852) (Fitzpatrick 1980), when more than a million people left the country for North America. Incomers to Canada came from both Ulster, and from the Scots-Irish fleeing from the American War of Independence. Emigration to Australia began much later, and in fewer numbers due to the distances involved. Convicts were transported initially to North America (concluding after the War of Independence (National Archives of Ireland n.d.)), and to Australia. Government-assisted programmes assisted the relocation of workhouse inhabitants, to meet an Australian labour shortage.

Genealogy has always had an issue with respectability and lack of rigour of its research; it is often dismissed as an "amateurish pastime" by traditional academics. This partly stems from cases where people falsified connections to royalty and the landed gentry; such as the Mullins family in the Irish Peerage (MacNeill 1894). Taylor and Crandall (1986 quoted in Bishop 2003) suggested that "genealogical research has been deemed too personal; the methodology is too straightforward; and the field lacks professional oversight". Carter (1973) described family historians as "apt to be denigrated or ridiculed by the serious historian, yet many of their devotees are earnest and well-meaning seekers after knowledge, and something must be said of the subject here, if only because so many genealogical researchers have only the vaguest ideas, not only of the bibliographical basis of study, but of how to set to work". He recognised the quality work of the Society of Genealogists, but implied that many genealogies/pedigrees that have been produced are riddled with error.

Elizabeth Shown Mills (2003) calls for action to fight for genealogy (or generational history) to be recognised as a legitimate research field. "Genealogical scholarship — more appropriately called generational history — is by nature finely analytical. Other branches of history interpret through synthesis and generalisation, so that errors in detail rarely affect overall conclusions. Generational history, on the other hand, requires almost scientific precision". Generational historians are more akin to traditional academic researchers, possessing knowledge of research, contextual historical knowledge, representations of each person researched. She strongly advocates genealogists' need to define themselves and their identity to the media, archivists, librarians, governments, and other relevant agencies. Associations such as the Society of Genealogists, the Association of Genealogists and Researchers in Archives, and the Association of Scottish Genealogists and Record Agents, also seek to promote and uphold standards of research. Professional qualifications are offered by bodies such as the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies, and various university courses are also now available; mainly on a continuing education basis. The Universities of Dundee and Strathclyde offer courses at postgraduate level. Cadell (2008) considers that many aspects of research have become easier, accompanied by greatly increased rigour; finding the current standard of research by amateurs "remarkable". The field has gained a new "respectability", although he notes that a few archivists still are uncomfortable dealing with family historians (1.2, 2.5). The quality of academic-level genealogical writing is testament to the fact that not all genealogists and family historians are information-illiterate when establishing relationships and events within their research (1.6, 6.9). Reid (2003) further observed the ability of some 'amateur' researchers to produce sophisticated professional-level investigations with little training or practitioner involvement.

1.2   *Local Studies and Family History*

Local studies libraries have traditionally been home to genealogical researchers, hosting the information that can place names and dates in a wider historical context. In search of a personal connection to history, "people who come only with a vague idea of `looking at old houses', `finding where my grandmother lived' or `checking out the shipping photos' often enjoy the experience so much that they come again and again" (Gregg 2002). Moss (2007) considers genealogy and family history are "the interface between history and the archive,

even though most of our ancestors have left only the shallowest footprints on its surface; a name in a directory, a poor law register, a census or a list of emigrants". Tucker (2006) similarly felt "history, to most people, signified the big, official narrative in which the individual was overlooked or lost. This same role of connecting the past to the desire for community is enhanced through much of the research done in our repositories". Local studies and archives are gatekeepers between "the big, official narrative and the more personal story", preserving and giving access to users' documentary heritage.

The then Library Association Local Studies Group issued Guidelines for *Local Studies Provision in Public Libraries* (1990). Local Studies,

> *as applied to library local studies collections, can be defined as studies relating to the local environment in all its aspects, including geology, palaeontology, climatology and natural history; also as studies relating to all types of human endeavour within that environment, past, present and future…It is essential to recognize that local studies researchers require resources which will facilitate the study of local subjects in the greatest detail possible. Material required will be not only printed items but also manuscripts, three-dimensional material, works of art, and minutiae and ephemera of all kinds.*

These guidelines were extensively revised and expanded by Martin (2002), and themed into two strands, service and resources. He notes close ties with reference and information services, and also with museums and archives. Major recommendations for services include providing and assisting users with research materials, and providing "equal levels of service to the full range of customer groups", including local and family historians. Practitioners must develop relationships with other heritage professionals, other departments in the local authority and relevant groups; initiate interactions with local communities; market and promote the collection widely, and "maintain a dynamic presence on the Internet" (1.4). Such parties include those in the related fields of archives, museums and indexing, and various local and family history organisations are also vitally important (both nationally and locally), as are national repositories (Jamieson 1991). In terms of professional networking, the UK Local Studies group (now under CILIP) was formed to facilitate communication between those working in the field and reduce their isolation (Maxted 2002), through its journal, meetings and increasingly, blog (Dixon 2011). Other similar groups include the Genealogy and Local Studies Section of IFLA[2], and the Genealogy and Local Studies Group of the

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[2] International Federation of Libraries and Archives. GENLOC operate a JISCMail mailing list to aid communication and information dissemination.

Library Association of Ireland. Genealogy can prominently be seen in the names of these organisations. In addition to traditional local studies holdings, Martin's guidelines advise acquiring and producing materials, particularly images, maps and local information, in digital formats and contribute digitised materials to national projects. The American Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) also have several relevant guidelines, in terms of Genealogy and Local/Family History, and in Electronic Services (RUSA 2010).

Barber (2002a) highlights that "every local studies library is a specialist resource"; their strength partly derived from their long history. Many items are "rare or unique", including local works not necessarily held elsewhere. The value of local studies holdings is not always fully understood or appreciated by users, nor by those elsewhere in the library and authority. The memory of a local area is illustrated through books, ephemera, both local and regional histories, local literatures, dissertations, directories, electoral registers, newspapers, periodicals, maps, illustrations and photographs. Collections will also hold more generic reference works, and in some cases microfilms of local census records and the International Genealogical Index (*IGI*). They also have an important part to play in creation of material, harnessing a "unique pool of the collective memory" from the local population (Dixon 2002). With complimentary materials also held in "national, regional, academic and specialist institutions", practitioners must have awareness of potential links to their own collection. Given the overlap between libraries, archives (and museums), instances of local studies or heritage centres are increasing, bringing services together as one (although local studies and archive convergence is the more common). These, however, may not be the optimum structure in a particular area; and various local government reorganisations have further muddied responsibilities for collections and services (Dewe 2002c). "The respective roles of libraries and museums are not always clear to members of the public, and each will be approached regarding matters concerning the other", which is frequently true of local studies, record offices, and galleries (Lynes 1974). Not all authorities have all establishments, further raising confusion in the public's minds, depending on their experience (8.2). As scopes overlap and are increasingly blurred, material may sit well in more than one collection, although boundaries should be well defined within each authority.

In terms of UK legislation, public libraries and their associated local studies collections were initially instigated by the Public Libraries Act 1850. This "gave legitimacy to a range of facilities designed to support mass education that was already in place: an early manifestation of the role of libraries in social inclusion" (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee 2005). Local authorities could opt-in to library provision, but were limited in terms of resources that could be spent; therefore uptake was often low in poorer areas. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 (England and Wales) made it "the duty of every library authority to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof"; to hold adequate and appropriate materials in many formats; encourage full use of the service; provide information on collection; and advise on this use. Authorities had to provide information to demonstrate their provision, which gave central government an overview of local library services for the first time, along with the power to intervene if library authorities failed to make this provision. A collection of Public Library Standards was launched in 1998 to try and pin down these definitions (House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee 2005); however, these have since been abandoned. Scotland was "rate limited" on library expenditure for longer than the rest of the UK, and library advocates fought hard for legislation equivalent to the 1964 Act[3]. The Public Libraries Consolidation (Scotland) Act as amended in Schedule 21 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 overcame some problems, but some issues of service quality remained (Osbourne 2008). Norma Armstrong, in *Local Collections in Scotland* (1977), addresses the shaping of Scottish collections by the McBoyle, Robertson and Alexander reports concerning Local Authority Records, Public Library Standards, and Adult education respectively, as well as Scottish and UK legislation.

The revision by Carter (1973) of seminal work *J.L.Hobbs' Local History and the Library* notes the post-WW2 changes when local history entered the mainstream, attracting serious attention and respect from the "man in the street", as well as increased interest by education sectors and media. He observes the "greater prominence" of local history in schools, with more hands on experience with primary sources and materials, perhaps more immediately relevant than national history, where both children and adult researchers can find personal meaning (Barratt 2009). Although not always seen as important or worthwhile within the

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[3] Public Libraries (Scotland) Acts 1887 to 1955.

library profession and community, or local authority, Carter argues that local history is where libraries have the greatest impact on lifelong learning and the community. He also describes the growth in local history's Academic respectability during the post-war period; due in no small part to Professor W.G. Hoskins and the Department of English Local History at Leicester University[4]; one of the first to offer local history courses at degree level. Local history "not only gained an academic respectability but it has also been popularised to an extraordinary degree" (Bott 1988); she encourages local studies librarians to embrace the public's enthusiasm for *their* local history, and maintain their support. Both Blizzard (1988) and Nurse (1988) noted the exponential increase of use of local studies material in nearly all levels of education, the latter observing the tripling of local studies libraries' use in the previous ten years, attributing the rise in family history research as one main factor in this. However, this "also places a burden on the staff who have to cope with a rising tide of complex enquiries"; impacting on administrative tasks, such as cataloguing and documentation, which ultimately increase access to users. Similarly Dewe (2002c) welcomed new investment in services that arrived with the People's Network (1.4), but advised that routine backroom activities needed to be retained to safeguard the future of collections. With "at least half their users come from outside of their administrative area", much correspondence is received from family history researchers regarding the extent of the collections, and also from the above looking for remote research.

Similarly to the terminology shift from genealogy to family history (1.1), local history was becoming local studies within the (principally public) library sector; this reflected a more dynamic collection that, serving "the locality in the same manner as a national library serves the nation" (Nichols 1979). Although there is no standard pattern of service provision and structure, the remit of local studies encompasses both local history and also contemporary aspects of the community. Local studies is now the most dominant term in the profession (Dewe 2002b), but some collections use the "marketing-oriented term *local heritage*" (Reid and Macafee 2007). "Local studies" is common in Australia (Bundy 1999), although collections are still seen by many as largely historical; it is still named local history in the USA. Dewe (2002d) observed that local collections, by whatever name, are now largely recognised worldwide, despite absences in the literature from particular regions. Local

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[4] It is interesting to note that a several quality local history resources (popular with researchers) have emerged from Leicester University (5.9).

studies and archive practitioners have anecdotally been described as unsung heroes of *WDYTYA?*[5]; as suggested in 1.1 above, they are heavily involved in much background research not seen onscreen (*Talking Scot* 2007). Some local studies and archives services felt links were rather one-way, and services were not being highlighted enough (Archive Awareness Campaign 2005). Irving (2010), observing that practitioners involved in the show are often invisible or anonymous, notes the Canadian version, made in association with Library and Archives Canada, took care to demonstrate "the key role of archives and libraries in this sleuthing", making this explicit to the viewers.

Owing to their attachment to local authorities, the forming and maintenance of collections are complicated by the periodic reorganisations which take place in local government. The sometimes fluid boundaries of counties and areas make collecting local information more complex; "a full history cannot be divorced from the surrounding region...interest...is not limited by a local authority boundary" (Nichols 1979). Hirst (2003) noted particular challenges for family history queries in Northern Ireland following their political re-organisation. Initially archival materials were separate from the local studies service (although they are now more commonly hosted together (7.2)). Descriptions of the administration and organisation of local studies after the 1975 Local Government reorganisation (Nichols 1976) illustrate the confusing diversity of services, with main research collections tending to be centralised, and smaller ones (often with duplicated materials) in outlying branches. London boroughs faced the biggest degree of change; Metropolitan districts generally widened their areas of interest. Although librarians felt provision would improve (or at least fair no worse) from this reorganisation, relationships with archives and record offices were detrimentally affected; the same body was not always responsible, the provider of one or other had changed, or they had been separated in council structures where once administered together[6]. However, the present administrative definitions of 'local' will likely have little bearing on the expectations of local communities, and indeed family historians (Reid 2003).

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[5] Local Studies participant LS13 (3.8, Chapter 7) was involved in some of the research for *WDYTYA?*
[6] Within England and Wales, only 25% of non-metropolitan counties had both archives and libraries in the same strand of management structure of the council.

Further reorganisation in 1995 produced eight types of authority: "county, district, London borough, metropolitan, English unitary, Scottish unitary, Welsh unitary and Northern Irish districts[7]" (Local Government Talent n.d.). Scotland's local government was reorganised from a two-tier system into 29 unitary authorities, also retaining the 3 existing island authorities (Gittings 2002). Further reorganisation took place in 2009 (idea.gov.uk 2010), with the creation of five new county-wide unitary authorities (Durham, Cornwall, Northumberland, Shropshire, and Wiltshire). Cheshire and Bedfordshire have both been split into two unitary authorities (Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester; Bedford, Central Bedfordshire). In England, Wales and Scotland, responsibility for libraries falls to county, metropolitan/unitary, and London borough authorities. Osbome (1997) notes that even after these reorganisations and the disappearance of many 'traditional' counties, their identity remains; many still identify themselves as belonging to them. Local studies have a particular opportunity and responsibility to contribute to and uphold cultural expression because of their availability and accessibility to all.

Harvey (1992) summarised the challenges involved in genealogical service provision as "the subject, the people, and the librarian's response". However, some in the profession have not always held the best opinion of genealogists and family history researchers: "You know the type. You probably spotted them coming a mile away. The person who walks up to the desk and naively asks 'Where is the book with my family's history in it?' The genealogy-patron-from-hell has just coyly announced that you won't be getting much other work done today" (Howells 2001). Barth (1997) observed an apprehensive relationship between the two; "each seeing each other as somewhat of a distraction to their overall purpose". With an enquiry service vital in family history provision (Harvey 1991), the rapidly increasing popularity and number of researchers highlights a pressing need within the profession to address issues of genealogical support. "As information providers, librarians have both moral and professional obligations to assure the source information is reliable, of legal public domain content, and is offered in compliance with professional standards" (Davidsson 2004). Stahr (2003) enthusiastically notes the positive contribution such patrons have to outreach and public relations; and can often speak out on behalf of the library; Harvey (1991) and Ansell (1988) both note that genealogists tend to be taken more seriously in local studies than

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[7] "There are 27 counties, 33 London boroughs, 36 metropolitans, 201 districts and 56 English unitaries. There are 32 Scottish unitaries, 22 Welsh unitaries and 26 Northern Irish districts" (Local Government Talent n.d.).

perhaps elsewhere in the library sector. Genealogical researchers are consistently the largest user group within archives with "50 to 90 percent of all users" (Tucker 2004); and family history is a highly visible method of local studies materials' impact on lifelong learning. The unprecedented demands on services must be balanced against the impact on traditional backroom functions (Longmore 2000), which in turn maintain service quality.

1.3   e-Family History(?)

The emergence of research resources on the Internet in the later nineties and in the current century is one of the most heavily cited reasons for the explosion in family history's popularity (Genealogy.com 2000). The ease that e-genealogical resources bring to some parts of the research process has been highlighted in both broadcast and print media and has "helped democratize genealogy" (Hornblower 1999). Some may argue in fact that there is no such thing as e-genealogy or e-family history; Internet use is one element within the research process. This would be substantiated by the cessation of the Society of Genealogists' *Computers in Genealogy* magazine in 2005, for reasons that computers and the Internet had changed so rapidly and had subsequently become part of mainstream research (Society of Genealogists 2011). For the purposes of this research, a distinction will be drawn between 'online' and 'offline', as it is online activities and research behaviour that it has sought to examine.

Genealogical activities online include: "research in online resources or databases, seeking information in chat rooms or listservs, finding contact information for libraries or archives...planning research trips"; and constructing websites which record family trees and research results (Yakel 2004). Veale (2005) stated that the "social and methodical aspects" of genealogy are particularly suited to the Internet, largely removing the need for long distance travel to repositories and allowing researchers to collaborate on a worldwide basis. Reid and Macafee (2007) similarly note the effect the "connectivity of the digital age" has had on family history research, where "individuals researching their family trees are now quite likely to find that the distant relatives they have just discovered are also online looking for them", allowing worldwide collaboration. Therefore, although a resource may be UK-based, a significant proportion of users of will in fact originate outside the British Isles.

An increasingly wide range of e-genealogical and e-family history resources are now available online (Christian 2009). In terms of the 'building blocks' of a family tree, civil registration[8] and census[9] records are where most researchers begin (*Ancestry*[10]; *Origins*[11]; *Findmypast*[12]; *ScotlandsPeople*[13]; *1901 Census*[14]; *FreeBMD*[15]; *UKBMD*[16]; and *FreeCEN*[17]). Births, marriages and deaths are the main navigating information for a genealogy. Census returns are the next step, giving the addresses, occupations, places of birth, and other household members (Reid 2003). Prior to civil registration, such events are recorded in parish registers (*FamilySearch*[18]; *FreeREG*[19]). The main index to these is the *IGI*; *FamilySearch* hosts the electronic version of this, produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church). Although greatly increasing access, this inherits deficiencies (consistency of names, missing 10% of births and marriages, even more death registers), and as an index, presents only the bare facts which the actual registers contain. Researchers still have to seek out original or microfilm copies of these (Reid 2003) to get the full picture. These are rarely available electronically (except in the case of *ScotlandsPeople*). Other records commonly found online include: wills; monumental inscriptions; tithes[20]; Griffith's Valuation[21]; newspapers; obituaries; and various directories.

Family and local history societies (both individually, and larger organisations such as the *Society of Genealogists*[22]; *Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies*[23]; and umbrella *Federation of Family History Societies*[24]) are excellent for well researched information and contacts for a particular area of interest. Religious information can be extracted from the religious entities

[8] All births, marriages and deaths were required to be registered from 1837 in England and Wales, and from 1855 in Scotland.
[9] 1841-1911 in the UK.
[10] Ancestry, 2011a. *Ancestry.com* [online] Available at: http://www.ancestry.com [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[11] OMS Services, 2011a. *Origins.* [online] Available at: http://www.origins.net [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[12] brightsolid, 2011a. *Find My Past.* [online] Available at: http://www.findmypast.co.uk [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[13] brightsolid, 2011b. *ScotlandsPeople.* [online] Available at: http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[14] Genes Reunited Ltd., 2011a. *1901 Census Online.* [online] Available at: http://www.1901censusonline.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[15] FreeBMD, 2011. *FreeBMD.* [online] Available at: http://www.freebmd.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[16] Hartas, I. and Hartas, S., 2011. *UKBMD.* [online] Available at: http://www.ukbmd.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[17] FreeCEN, 2011. *FreeCEN* .[online] Available at: http://www.freecen.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[18] Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011a. *FamilySearch.* [online] Available at: http://www.familysearch.org/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[19] FreeREG, 2011. *FreeREG.* [online] Available at: http://www.freereg.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[20] Tithes were an annual payment made to the local church ,of a proportion of a parishioner's yearly produce.
[21] A survey of Irish property ownership.
[22] SoG, 2011. *Society of Genealogists.* [online] Available at: http://www.sog.org.uk/index.shtml [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[23] IHGS, 2011. *Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies.* [online] Available at: http://www.ihgs.ac.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[24] FFHS, 2011. *Federation of Family History Societies.* [online] Available at: http://www.ffhs.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

themselves, their archives/libraries; or study societies (e.g. the *Quaker Family History Society*[25]). Also of vital importance are local and national repositories (including the *National Archives* (NA)[26], *British Library*[27], *National Library of Scotland*[28], *General Register Office for Scotland* (GROS)[29]; *National Archives of Ireland*[30]; the *Public Record Office of Northern Ireland*[31]); and gateways and finding aids to their holdings (*ARCHON*[32]; *A2A*[33]; *Scottish Archive Network (SCAN)*[34]; *Archives Wales*[35]). *SCAN* was an initial collaboration between the NAS and the Genealogical Society of Utah, to facilitate Internet access to Scotland's cultural heritage in three ways: archive catalogues from (nearly) all Scottish archival repositories; reference resources, usable for both novice and experienced researchers; and access to 2.5 images of (initially) Scottish wills. This has since become part of the main business of the NAS (MacKenzie 2008). The *Scottish Documents* website emerged from this (Anderson and Baird 2003); digitising and indexing Scottish wills, creating one of the first examples of "primary" family history information available remotely, with digital images available for purchase by users for £5. The resultant resource has subsequently been absorbed into *ScotlandsPeople*. Public libraries (which can be accessed through *UK Public Libraries*[36]); university libraries; and family history centres[37] are also of high significance.

Researchers can locate information on their particular surname interests (*Online Names Directory*[38]; *Guild of One-Name Studies*[39]; *RootsWeb* Message Boards[40]), and other information on names, such as etymologies and surname distribution analyses. There are many sites for

[25] QFHS, 2011. *Quaker Family History Society* [online] Available at: http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~engqfhs/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[26] National Archives, 2011a. *The National Archives* [online] Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[27] British Library, 2011. *The British Library* [online] Available at: http://www.bl.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[28] NLS, 2011. *National Library of Scotland* [online] Available at: http://www.nls.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[29] GROS, 2011. *General Register Office for Scotland* [online] Available at: http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[30] National Archives of Ireland, 2011. *The National Archives of Ireland* [online] Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.ie/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[31] PRONI, 2011. [online] Available at: http://www.proni.gov.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[32] National Archives, 2011b. *ARCHON Directory* [online] Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[33] National Archives, 2011c. *Access to Archives* [online] Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[34] SCAN, 2011. *Scottish Archive Network* [online] Available at: http://www.scan.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[35] Archives Wales, 2011. *Archives Wales* [online] Available at: http://www.archivesnetworkwales.info/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[36] Harden, S. And Harden, R., 2011. *UK Public Libraries on the Web* [online] Available at: http://ds.dial.pipex.com/town/square/ac940/ukpublib.html [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[37] Local branches of the LDS Church's Family History Library.

[38] Family History Directory, 2011. *Online Names* [online] Available at: http://www.familyhistorydirectory.com/online-names/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[39] GOONS, 2011. *The Guild of One-Name Studies* [online] Available at: http://www.one-name.org/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[40] RootsWeb, 2011a. *RootsWeb* [online] Available at: http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

national, local and social history: *GENUKI*[41], *Victoria County History*[42]; *British History Online*[43]; *Knowsley Local History*[44]; *Digital Handsworth*[45]; *PortCities*[46]; *Powys Heritage Online*[47] and *The Workhouse*[48]. Photographs are plentiful; either in national (*Images of England*[49]; *ViewFinder*[50]) or local collections (*PhotoLondon*[51]*; Collage*[52]*; Virtual Mitchell*[53]*; Picture Sheffield*[54]*; Picture the Past*[55]*);* and individual personal archives. Researchers can access information on social groups relevant to their ancestors: religious bodies and clergy; occupations; crime; the armed forces; migration; heraldry, royalty and the nobility, many elements of geography, including mapping (both historic and modern) and gazetteers. Portals and gateways, including *Cyndi's List*[56]; *WorldGenWeb*[57] and *Family Genealogy and History Internet Education Directory*[58]*,* open the doors to discovery of other sites. Much information can also be gained from personal home pages, pedigrees[59], and blogs. In addition to informational resources personal contacts can be fostered through discussion forums/newsgroups (*RootsWeb; Ancestry Message Boards*[60]; *RootsChat*[61]; *Talking Scot*[62]) and social networking sites; both generic ones such as *Facebook*[63] (which now has family tree applications such as *We're Related*[64] and *Family Tree*[65]), or more

[41] GENUKI, 2011. *GENUKI* [online] Available at: http://www.genuki.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[42] Institute of Historical Research, 2011. *Welcome to the Victoria County History* [online] Available at: http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[43] University of London & History of Parliament Trust , 2011. *British History Online* [online] Available at: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[44] Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council , 2011. *Knowsley Local History* [online] Available at: http://history.knowsley.gov.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[45] Birmingham City Council, 2011a. *Digital Handsworth* [online] Available at: http://www.digitalhandsworth.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[46] PortCities, 2011a. *PortCities UK* [online] Available at: http://www.portcities.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[47] Powys County Council, 2011. [online] Available at: http://history.powys.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[48] Higginbottom, P., 2011. *The History of the Workhouse* [online] Available at: http://workhouses.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[49] English Heritage, 2011a. *Images of England* [online] Available at: http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[50] English Heritage, 2011b. *ViewFinder* [online] Available at: http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[51] PhotoLondon, 2011. *PhotoLondon* [online] Available at: http://www.photolondon.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[52] City of London, 2011. *COLLAGE* [online] Available at: http://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/collage/app [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[53] Glasgow City Council, 2011. *Virtual Mitchell* [online] Available at: http://www.mitchelllibrary.org/virtualmitchell/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[54] Sheffield City Council, 2011. *Picture Sheffield* [online] Available at: http://www.picturesheffield.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[55] North East Midland Photographic Record, 2011. *Picture the Past* [online] Available at: http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[56] Howells, C., 2011a. *Cyndi's List* [online] Available at: http://www.cyndislist.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[57] WorldGenWeb Project, 2011. *The WorldGenWeb Project* [online] Available at: http://www.worldgenweb.org/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[58] Tinney, V.C. and Tinney, T.M., 2011. *Family Genealogy & History Internet Education Directory* [online] Available at: http://www.academic-genealogy.com [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[59] Family tree.

[60] Ancestry, 2011b. *Message Boards* [online] Available at: http://boards.ancestry.co.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[61] RootsChat.com, 2011. *RootsChat* [online] Available at: http://www.rootschat.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[62] Talking Scot, 2011. *Talking Scot* [online] Available at: http://www.talkingscot.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[63] Facebook, 2011a. *Facebook.com* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[64] Facebook, 2011b. [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/myrelatives [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[65] Facebook, 2011c. [online] Available at: http://apps.facebook.com/familytree/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

specialised ones like *Genes Reunited*[66] or personal heritage site *Nations' Memory Bank*[67] (Barratt 2009).

Christian (n.d.) traced the development and emergence of family history on the Internet and the web. Newsgroups and mailing lists began to emerge in the 1980s[68], and the first personal family tree pages appeared online in 1993. In 1994, *North of Ireland FHS*[69] launched the (likely) first FHS web site; and the *Genealogy Home Page*[70] (the first directory of Internet genealogy resources). 1995 saw the emergence of *GENUKI*, and the continuing development of more web sites and mailing lists. 1996 saw the birth of commercial giant *Ancestry.com*, *WorldGenWeb, RootsWeb*, and many local authority archives appeared online for the first time[71]. Similarly *Familia*[72] (1.4) launched in 1997, sharing details of the genealogical holdings of public libraries in the British Isles. The volunteer co-operative transcription project *FreeBMD* began in 1998, alongside the launch of the *ARCHON* Directory and *Scots Origins*[73] (the first pay-per-view site for UK public records). 1999 saw the launch of the revolutionary *FamilySearch*, and of *Powys Heritage Online*; government genealogy portal *Family Records*[74] was launched in 2000, as was historical maps site *Old Maps*[75].

It was January 2002 when the *1901 Census* launched, only to be closed less than a week later after the website collapsed due to unprecedented demanded (BBC News 2002a, 2002b). As also referred to by Reid (2003) in the opening quote, Tucker (2006) notes how this made observers sit up and take notice of the popularity of family history. "Today, family historians who enter our repositories via the World Wide Web also change the way we will promote our holdings, and shape the education we give researchers who may become supporters". The census was eventually re-launched in November that year, which also saw the arrival of *Genes Connected* (now *Genes Reunited*); *ScotlandsPeople*, and *Ancestry.co.uk*. Following the

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[66] Genes Reunited Ltd., 2011b. *Genes Reunited* [online] Available at: http://www.genesreunited.co.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[67] Barratt, N., 2010. *Nations' Memory Bank* [online] Available at: http://www.nationsmemorybank.com [Accessed 12 April 2010]

[68] 1983 saw the emergence of genealogy newsgroup net.roots (later soc.roots, becoming soc.genealogy in 1994) (Christian n.d.)

[69] NIFHS, 2011. *North of Ireland Family History Society* [online] Available at: http://www.nifhs.org/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[70] No longer available.

[71] Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Somerset and Lincolnshire Archives. (Christian n.d.)

[72] No longer available.

[73] OMS Services, 2011b. *Scots Origins.* [online] Available at: http://www.scotsorigins.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]; access to civil registration and census recorded has now been superseded by *ScotlandsPeople.*

[74] No longer available.

[75] Old-maps.co.uk, 2011. *Old maps – the online repository of historic maps.* [online] Available at: http://www.old-maps.co.uk [Accessed 13 September 2011]

merger of the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission, the National Archives was established in 2003; alongside the launch of *FreeCEN*, and commercial site *1837online*[76]. The 1901 Census[77] was acquired by *Genes Reunited* in 2005, and British army WWI service and pension records were added to *Ancestry* in 2007. *FamilySearch* (2007) launched its Records Access program, which Eastman (2007) termed "the most important genealogy announcement of the past few years". The service would digitise, index (by *FamilySearch* volunteers worldwide[78]), and publish records from libraries and archives, with the indexes freely hosted on the *FamilySearch* site. This would link to the digital images, where the originating repository could then charge for access[79]. Other recent major developments include the early release of the 1911 Census in 2009, and the announcement from the British Library and brightsolid[80] of a major historic newspaper digitisation project.

Patout (2004) demonstrates the philosophy and importance of e-access to family history records: "the importance of the Obituary Index is found in the access to newspaper information and the focus that it provides when initiating a specific enquiry. The index can help researchers rapidly narrow a genealogy search to a specific time frame, a specific religious affiliation or specific sets of government or religious records, thus making more efficient use of time and effort...As an access point for genealogical research...[it] is certain to broaden accessibility, making use faster, simpler and more productive for end users...accelerat[ing] the process of substantiating all-important birth, death and cemetery records, all-important aspects of basic genealogical enquiry". Use of these resources continues to increase. Internet researchers Nielsen//NetRatings (2005) reported that visitors to UK Internet genealogy category websites had hit "1.7 million surfers, or 7% of the total people online in the UK logging on to research their family history", an increase of 44% over the previous year; time spent on genealogy websites also substantially increased overall. This was also attributed to the growth of broadband Internet access from home. Following the first two series of *WDYTYA?*, BBC History website traffic peaked at 1.9 million users in November 2004. The family history pages received the highest number of page impressions

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[76] Now *FindMyPast*.

[77] England and Wales.

[78] Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2011b. *Worldwide Records Indexing*. [online] Available at: https://www.familysearch.org/volunteer/indexing [Accessed 6 September 2011]

[79] Although "full, free access to both the indices and images will be provided to family history centers, FamilySearch managed facilities" (*FamilySearch* 2007).

[80] Operator of *ScotlandsPeople.*

(22%) of any part of the history site during the series (despite consisting of only 2% of pages). There were also large attendances at themed BBC events; attendees were interested in more than the celebrity: the ways in which ancestors lived, the availability of local and national records, and how to apply similar research techniques themselves. The major impact of the series was considered "to legitimise an ongoing search (the majority) or to inspire others to realise a latent ambition" in pursuing their own story (Simor 2006).

Despite the many advantages brought by e-genealogy, Davidsson (2004) felt wary of "a slow-paced, thorough field of study such as genealogy [becoming] high-tech". Some researchers even feared that new technology would destroy the genealogical community (Howells 2002), but despite these concerns, "what the Internet has revolutionised is not the process of genealogy, but the ease with which some aspects of can be carried out" (Christian 2009). Veale describes a "quickie genealogist" (2004a), who despite the many warnings within the genealogical instructional literature, expect their research to be done for them. "Frequently a well-meaning friend, Aunt Mary or even a newspaper article will lead them to believe that Aunt Mary, or a family history library, or even the Internet will have all their answers. They are sure that locating the information they need should be easy and that a wealth of details will be available to them immediately" (Francis 2004). Also, the majority of Internet resources provide only a search mechanism (Webster 2005) or raw materials lacking in context. For example, Bever (2003) notes that MI resources often omit the relationships of plots to each other: "while people do not die in alphabetical order, many transcriptions are arranged as if they do". However, as Tucker (2006) highlights, local studies' "place in the in-between has shifted". Phelps (2003a) suggests the availability of online resources "may mean that some patrons may not make it to the library, but rather may try to conduct their search solely via computer". She further stresses (2003b) that "one of the dangers of directing patrons to the Internet" is that they make an assumption that it will replace the need to search offline for primary information. It is an extremely helpful tool, and "library services have been greatly improved by the use of the web", but cannot replace the expertise and contextual information of local studies.

Ethical questions have also been raised about the reliability, sources and use of the available genealogical information, not only in regard to researchers (Francis 2004), but also some

information providers (Bernstein 2001; Davidsson 2004). Little (2008) highlights that, in some cases, "the technology of archival access is not neutral...For the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), genealogy is—if not a form of ancestor worship—then at least a religious duty and a form of evangelism...principally driven by its practice of proxy baptism". Although *FamilySearch* is an incredibly useful genealogical tool, the LDS' "theological underpinning has become partially invisible", almost creating a conflict of interest; their use in this way is beyond the conventional use of records. However, with their technological input into *SCAN* and other projects, their "ongoing contribution...to the development of archival practice (and indexing) across the world should not be underestimated or ignored". What level of information literacy do family historians themselves have? Are they aware "when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner" (CILIP 2004)? Do they apply this knowledge in the "real world" of their own research (Williams and Coles 2003)? The skills required for research will also encompass digital literacy, as more experienced genealogists adapt to new technology and resources; skills that local studies can provide.

1.4   e-Local Studies

Clearly, the fascination with family history research on the Internet and in libraries is significant, and public service librarians need to prepare to meet the needs of this ever-growing patron population. (Stahr 2003)

As 1.2 indicates, local studies librarians and other information and heritage practitioners have much experience working with family history researchers. Geddes (2004) draws attention to East Ayrshire's guide to *First Steps in Family History*, with details of holdings in the LS library, but also includes search strategies and ideas for more advanced researchers. Martin (2004) gives details and publicity for various levels of *Family history courses in East Dunbartonshire*. With Leigh and Best (2002) reminding us of the "changing face of the environment in which libraries exist", Davidsson (2004) observes "public libraries[81] can offer family history researchers the print and electronic resources, professional guidance, and training necessary to make their genealogical journeys a success". With e-genealogy "one of the enduring success stories of the Internet" and given that "virtually all aspects of local and

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[81] Although local studies collections are not by any means exclusively based in public libraries, materials within the public library remit are more likely to be of interest.

community history can fulfil a role within family history", Reid (2003) stresses the importance of local studies' uptake of web resources in this area of service. Although researchers have no issue locating raw data at a distance, "electronic sources are often very weak at providing the social and occupational contexts and do not provide the much-sought-after details of how they lived their lives. This is where the librarian, on a very local level, can step in...It is in the library's interests to have a front end which includes a gateway to as many local sites as possible"; mixing local and national sources; comparatively inexpensive to create, and extending genealogical service provision to smaller branch libraries and beyond. Collections are represented on the Internet to varying degrees, ranging from a bare place-holder site, to thorough in-depth resources from Devon[82] and Gateshead[83] Library Services. If, as Reid notes, "[l]ocal studies libraries exist in order to recognise the social, economic and cultural activities of the local community" and "record, preserve and celebrate these activities and achievements", the Internet age would seem to provide an opportunity to make their material perfectly complimentary to e-genealogical resources.

Seeking a new role for public libraries in the "Information Age", the UK Government commissioned the *New Library* (Library and Information Commission 1997) Report, which advocated a new UK Public Library Network; allowing access to "knowledge, imagination and learning", with priority for lifelong learning, support for training, employment and business, and social cohesion. The development of library-created resources was encouraged (created with or without other public/private sector partners), alongside digitisation of library's rare/special collections, as well as facilitating access to free and commercial Internet resources and more national collections. *Virtually New* (Parry 1998) reviewed the "progress and nature of digitisation projects" in public libraries and archives, and how to move *New Library* ideas forward and convert "currently held in traditional formats into digital format". He identified local studies and special collections as "key public library content", with digitisation expanding and enabling access to often unique material. The lack of cataloguing is a "key area for development and a "necessary corollary and in many cases a prerequisite for digitisation". He highlights the need for a key coordinating body, with operational (providing technology and digitisation services) as well as advisory (provision of

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[82] Devon County Council, 2011a. *Local Studies* [online] Available at: http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies [Accessed 3 July 2011]

[83] Gateshead Council, 2011. *ASAP Live – Local History* [online] Available at: http://www.localhistorygateshead.com/ [Accessed 3 July 2011]

information and expertise) functions. "Substantial new external funding" is required; potential sources included: central government, local authorities, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Grid for Learning, various sources of partnership funding and private sector investment. Yakel (2005) also discussed 'Hidden Collections'; either completely uncatalogued/unprocessed materials, those not in an online catalogue, or there at collection-level only. These then become even more undiscoverable in the digital age. Chapman, Kingsley and Dempsey (1999)'s *Full Disclosure* report estimated that 12 million such records existed in public libraries alone; with local studies often more heavily affected than other departments. "Increased knowledge of collections leading to additional use maximises the return from investment in stock and staff, making them more cost effective". They, and Reid and Macafee (2007), note that digitisation alone is not effective, but that cataloguing and descriptive metadata, of a high quality (Hume and Lock 2002), are still necessary for access.

In addition to traditional roles supporting "literacy, reading and personal and community growth", the DCMS (2001) note that "new Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) do not threaten the existence of public libraries but offer an opportunity to provide increasingly valuable and effective services for users". Libraries are vitally important in the eyes of government, underpinning education and lifelong learning, and enhancing public access to knowledge and information. CILIP (2010) similarly highlight the positive influence of libraries in providing identity and opportunities to a community; a good library will promote learning, local identity and community pride; and should offer events to facilitate this, and to support local and family history. It must be inclusive and "encourage participation and full use of the service", providing a wide range of all formats of information for all borrowers, whether borrowing remotely or in person. EARL, the "Consortium for Public Library Networking" (Baigent and Moore 1999), was instigated to bridge between policy and implementation outlined in *New Library* (Library and Information Commission 1997). They addressed and initiated consortium purchasing (Ball 2003), the Ask-a-Librarian service, and *Familia*, an innovative web directory of UK library holdings of (physical) family history resources (Hume and Lock 2002). *Familia*'s existence was threatened, however, following EARL's later dismantling; libraries were asked to contribute to hosting costs, or the site would cease to exist (Hayes 2003). This worked for a period of time; however, the website has now disappeared.

e-Local studies is a term not at all prevalent in the literature, only previously observed in association with *KAMRA* (Visiting Arts 2007), a cross-sector Slovenian portal providing access to digital local history and cultural objects and information (Karun 2007). Elsewhere there are copious of references to e-content, but not specifically to e-local studies. So what is available from e-local studies and what can this add to family history research? Information such as property valuation rolls (tenants, rateable values and landlords), school rolls, photographs, could be digitised and mounted online (Reid 2003). Indexes to newspapers and other materials can provide partial remote access to non-digital materials; Moray Council's *Libindx* (Seton 1991) allows mostly newspapers, but also "books, photographs, maps and other documents", to be searched for a person, place, or other subject, listing entries in newspapers and resources across the collection. This gives a great increase in service, which would have previously required many more extra staff. East Dunbartonshire Council examined how smaller authorities could construct and control their own projects outside NOF and other controlled schemes (Winch 2002), noting the importance of compatible cataloguing, so materials could be accessed by union catalogues in the future. *Peakland Heritage* highlights the history of the Peak District; facilitating "remote access to selected primary source material" and raising awareness of the local studies, archive and museum collections; and hosting contributions from independent information providers (Gordon 2003).

Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies services, "open[ed] up access to [all their] collections...to as wide and audience as possible" with a joint catalogue for the services through a single interface (Evans 2005). The *Tameside Oral History Project* (Lock 2006) collected materials from recent incomers to the local community, in particular those from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India, including interviews and photographs. East Renfrewshire's creation of a portal for Holocaust Remembrance Day in 2004 merged both a national focus and the testimonies of those involved from the local community with links to related resources and events (McGettigan, McMenemy and Poulter 2008). Co-operation between a local studies service, record office, local museum and local history society brought about digitisation and online access to a local collection of over 19,000 images, previously accessible only by card index (Melrose 2004). NOF not only

provided funding, but also advice and expertise that local studies will likely not possess, and vital to the success of the project. The COLLAGE project digitised 32,000 items from the Guildhall Library and Art Gallery (Leslie 2004), fully funded by the local authority; most could be accessed remotely (where copyright for online display had been granted), and purchased in a number of formats.

So, where are local studies in this new world of online family history materials? Are they *still* considered a family historian's destination? Despite developments in terms of subject gateways and digital reference, remarkably few UK local studies sites visibly break into the popular lists of resources amongst governmental, commercial and volunteer-run offerings; and when they do, they are not easily identifiable as such. Is the profession running the risk that new researchers may miss the important role of local studies? Hallam Smith (2000) muses that, to a certain degree, archives and other cultural repositories are *Lost in Cyberspace*: "overall we are not very visible in the cyber universe. It is true that our material often appears, as images or data, on genealogical or popular history websites, but equally it is often decontextualised and misinterpreted". With other online providers "eclipsing" provision, she wondered "why aren't people battering down our cyberdoors?" to find quality and authentic records and information, in their proper context. This may be due to a lack of marketing, inclusivity, or lack of awareness of user needs and wants. Libraries, resources and staff "appeared to be increasingly less visible to today's information consumer" (De Rosa *et al* 2005), with search engines their preferred search starting point. Although trusted to a similar degree, search engines "fit the information consumer's lifestyle" best, with exceedingly few choosing to begin a search at a library website. The "library brand" is seen as books only, and there was low awareness and use of both library websites, and of provision of free electronic information via the site. Usherwood, Wilson and Bryson (2005) similarly reported that libraries were still considered "relevant repositories of public knowledge... [but] not necessarily relevant to all people all of the time", although the public did have a higher level of trust in libraries. This is despite increasing physical visits (MLA 2006). A discussion (Barford 2007) of *Local Studies in Rutland* makes no mention at all of online material or of their website; *in 2007;* worrying, when e-family history content from other sectors is so highly developed. Local studies must find ways to make their services visible online.

McMenemy (2007) was struck by the highly inconsistent quality of Scottish library websites, and their general lack of Internet identity, largely subsumed by the parent local authority. Sites were frequently confusing, non user-friendly, potentially inducing information overload. The lack of consistency in library placement within authority organisational structures also confuses its identity. Catalogues were in some cases they were separate from the library pages; also the level of information presented about major collections was not as expected. Two libraries used domains outside their parent authorities; McMenemy felt these were both of higher quality, and this reflected "the depth and amount of content that can be presented". Ideally, libraries would operate their own independent site, creating a distinct Internet identity and presenting their services in a better way. Berube (2005) commented that UK public library websites (and local authority sites in general) operate on a "print-based paradigm", in that related services and information do not necessarily connect or flow logically into one another, owing to local authority structures. She also suggests that independent hosting may allow library sites more flexibility and freedom.

Crosby (2002) and Dixon (2011) also lament the reduction in specialist staff in local studies in difficult financial times; the former stressing that investment must continue to be made in staffing collections, not simply all directed at new technology. Melrose (2002) notes that the informality of enquiries brought with email technology also places further burdens on staff, who will need additional training with increased use of IT. Cadell (2008) further identifies that "with an increasing use of IT, there will be less need, and possibly less opportunity, for the genealogist to interface with that best of all finding aids, the archivist or librarian behind the desk. We have to be careful to see that the information available through the computer is properly described, not just to its content, but to its value". Somehow the knowledge and added value of librarians and archivists must also be captured, preserved, celebrated and made visible.

Increasing the awareness and understanding of the particularities of e-genealogical resources among library professionals is thought key to maintaining the quality of resource recommendations and enquiry services (Webster 2005). This is not to say, however, that user needs are currently not being met 'in-person' by local studies (Hudson 2005). Dewe (2002c) adds that now widely available resources include "high-priced subscription-based databases

and advertising-based commercial sites, we must still continue to step forward and redefine our role in this more competitive environment. Considering the rapidity with which the Internet now acts, we should also do so quickly" (Tucker 2006). She also stresses websites are important "in the public's understanding of these institutions and the collections they hold. Reid (2003) calls for proactivity on the part of local studies to take advantage of and face the challenge of the continuing surge of interest in family history: "users of local studies departments want to know much more about their ancestors than just the bare facts...With the national information providers leading the way in the provision of the raw materials of family history—the registers, the censuses and the like—it falls to local studies departments to provide the background and context that many family historians crave"; "embrac[ing] the public's enthusiasm for family history" (Reid and Macafee 2007). Practitioners need to "promote their collections more ingeniously than even before" (Barth 1997), and should consult with users and non-users, seeking out "those who have never heard about the available source material" (Melrose 2002). They must also act to further raise awareness in the public domain.

1.5   Scope of the Research

The roots of this research lie in the researcher's personal interests in both web design and Internet resources, but also in how these can enhance to understanding of one's family history, following personal contact with the Library of Congress' digitisation of their James Madison Carpenter collection[84]. The researcher's Great-Grandfather had been traced as a contributor to Carpenter's collection, and digital objects of his contributions can now be accessed on the LOC website, including early recordings of his vocal performances. Further, there is a gap in the research literature, specifically concerning the online research activities of family historians. Not only is this a rapidly-changing and dynamic field, but family history is a much more personal way of connecting people to history, and is now in the mainstream. It is vitally important to examine ways for local studies collections to maintain and enhance services to this user group online; as Tucker (2006) says, re-establish their place within e-research. Following Harvey (1992)'s observations of genealogical provision ("the subject and its sources, the people, and the librarian's response") and Reid and Macafee

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[84] LOC, 2010. *James Madison Carpenter Collection.* [online] Available at: http://www.loc.gov/folklife/guides/carpenter.html [Accessed 16 May 2010]

(2007)'s *Tripartite Paradigm of Local History* (research techniques, diverse sources, and the enthusiasm of investigators), the present research follows three central foci (or strands): e-genealogical resources, their users, and local studies collections. Research questions fall into these three areas:

Users:

The study aims to uncover who is using UK e-family history resources, in order to better understand e-local studies' potential user group. It is also valuable to be aware of their online research behaviour, and whether they use/display their knowledge of information literacy when researching in their own homes.

Resources:

In order to further practitioner understanding of e-resources, what are the characteristics of family history information on the Internet? What constitutes a good quality e-family history resource? How should an e-family history resource be evaluated? The popularity of certain e-resources and the immense take-up of Internet research suggest that there may be value in applying the same kind of visibility to e-local studies: Which resources are being used? How are the resources being used? Which resources are visible to users and why? Do commercially "branded" genealogy websites pull users in?

Local Studies:

It is also imperative for local studies to understand how users see their websites. To do this the research must first discover the current status of the web presences of local studies collections and e-family history provision. What could and should local studies practitioners be providing in terms of e-family history provision? Are local studies collections visible online to researchers? How can the online visibility of local studies collections be improved?

The research therefore seeks a better understanding of the users of these e-genealogical resources; how the users use the resources; and the resources themselves (Paul 1995), in order to elucidate ways in which local studies libraries can increase their visibility and encourage increased usage. It also seeks to examine collections from the perspective of users, in an attempt to gain ideas for making the 'added value' of the local studies collections more visible to them.

1.6   Aims and Objectives

The aims of the research followed the three-strand pattern of the research, with one aim corresponding to each strand:

(1)   To investigate the information seeking strategies and information literacy competencies of users of family historians in respect of online resources. *(User-focussed)*

(2)   To identify, examine, and categorise sources of, and services for, e-family history within the United Kingdom. *(Resource-focussed)*

(3)   To formulate methods by which local studies collections can, more visibly, enhance and add value to 'online family and community engagements'. *(Local Studies-focussed)*

Similarly, each aim was achieved with the use of two corresponding objectives:

User-focussed

(3)   To construct a demographic profile of the user community for UK e-family history resources.

(4)   To evaluate the information and digital literacy, and information-seeking competencies of these users, and identify and explore factors influencing their behaviour in the "real world" context of their research.

Resource-focussed

(3)   To identify UK sources of and services facilitating e-family history, and scrutinise existing information source and website criteria applicable to these resources.

(4)   To formulate specific evaluative criteria for e-family history resources, and apply these criteria to a purposeful sample of those resources earlier identified.

(5)   To identify resources provided by UK local studies collections that facilitate e-family history, and discuss practical methods of increasing the visibility of these to users.

(6)   To identify methods by which these public library resources can add value to online family and community research.

A frame of reference/definition which developed in the early stages of the research was the "genealogical fact". This was established to define information that researchers were seeking within the course of their genealogical or family history research, and this in turn helped to define e-family history resources. For the purposes of the thesis, a "genealogical fact" is defined as evidence pertaining to the intersection of ***any two or more*** of the following pieces of information: a *name*, a *date*, a *place*, or an *event*. These possible intersections are further demonstrated in Figure 1.2:
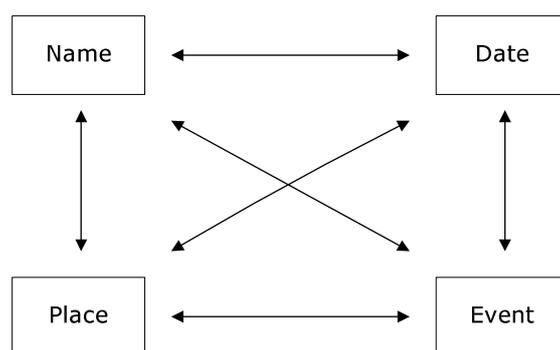
Figure 1.2: Potential connections establishing the genealogical fact

In all likelihood, most genealogical facts (GFs) will bring together three or more of these aspects. Very strong evidence will often link together all four; for example, a birth certificate is considered firm evidence of the elements of a person's birth (and likewise other certificates of civil registration). It establishes (amongst other details), that the person (name) was born (event) on (date) in a certain location (place). Likewise a census return establishes the location (place) of a person or family (name(s)) on a particular census date (date). Depending on the date of the census, this will link in other valuable information also. Photographs will, depending on their subject, link a date with either a person/group of people (name) or a place, in some cases both. The name was chosen before evidence of the definite shift in

terminology from genealogy to family history, but has remained. A GF in these terms can encompass family history, genealogical and local history research. This had a significant influence on the design and analysis of the research. Following from this, an e-family history resource is an online resource which contains information potentially leading to the discovery of a GF. In the context of the present research, these must also be located in the United Kingdom, or contain data concerning the UK.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

A review of pertinent literature (Chapter 2) and an exploration of the project's methodology (Chapter 3), material is presented in a thematic manner based around the three strands of the research. Chapter 4 begins with the strand at the heart of the investigation, the user, first establishing the demographic characteristics of the user population, subsequently providing the user context for the rest of the work. Chapter 5 examines resources, firstly establishing the evaluative criteria, then examining how users interact with resources. This encompasses source preferences, selection, and participants' own evaluation practices, in terms of both e-resources, and of information quality. Also discussed are resource discovery, navigation, commercial information, use of search engines within the research process, with more specific discussion around the 'Big Four' resources: *Ancestry; FamilySearch, ScotlandsPeople* and *Genes Reunited*. Chapter 6 begins to examine user research behaviour at a micro level, and will identify patterns found within the research behaviour of the participants. It will also explore participants' views and feelings on the research process. The final two findings chapters include discussions of local studies. Chapter 7 explores the current state of e-local studies provision (contemporary with the time of data collection (2007/2008)), both through benchmarking of websites, and interviews with practitioners. Chapter 8 then examines user interactions and experiences with e-local studies; their reactions to the websites (in terms of both local authority and local studies elements); and their wants and expectations. Chapter 9 presents discussion on the findings of the research hitherto presented, and presents a model of family historian online research behaviour developed from the patterns and categories earlier identified. Chapter 10 concludes the thesis, discusses the contribution to knowledge and offers recommendations for local studies practitioners and further research.

2.1   Introduction

This chapter presents and reviews the literature from areas surrounding the research. Literature is drawn from a wide range of research fields, sources and genres (3.3), and places the present study in context. The organisation of the review roughly mirrors that of the thesis, initially examining users and information behaviour in a general sense, in archives and libraries, and online; then more specifically family historians and genealogists, exploring both populations and their research behaviours. We then move into local studies, examining users, and relationships with family historians, services for family history; and resources and digitisation. The final sections of the review address library and local studies websites, concluding with marketing, of both libraries and collections, and of online presences. In addition to that presented here, literature is reviewed at strategic points throughout the thesis, such as material concerned with methods of data collection (3.6, 3.7, 3.8), and that used in the development of the evaluative criteria (5.2).

2.2   User Studies and Information Behaviour

User and information-seeking studies are of crucial benefit to the understanding by librarians and archivists of their users, but Fourie (2006) notes that there are often limited communications between academics and practitioners, and similarly no clear path to translate findings from studies into practice. The language in which these studies are communicated is "highly academic" with which many practitioners may be unfamiliar, and disseminated in journals and publications to which public libraries have no easy access. Orbach (1991) stressed the need to look holistically at user behaviour; previous interest often focused on "what researchers do from the point at which they enter repositories until they pack up and leave...[whereas] researchers arrive at the repository with fully or partially formulated queries, we need to concern ourselves with what researchers *seek* as well as what they *use*". Pendleton and Chatman (1998) suggest that libraries might make use of social and qualitative research into the contextual information use and worlds of non-users, to provide

insights as to how they might access and contribute to "small world" (or real world) lives. Nicholas and Dobrowolski (2000) argue that users should be seen as individual, whether they collect information by "unconventional, unusual or serendipitous means". They note that the future role of the information professional may be akin to that of a personal trainer, "understanding, counselling and training" information users.

Research on information behaviour and information-seeking developed from user studies (Wilson 2000), and has transformed into a vast research field with many diverse angles and approaches. Frequent and substantial reviews feature in ARIST (Case 2006; Fisher and Julien 2009) and elsewhere (Fisher, Erdelez and McKechnie 2005). For such an extensive field, attempting a comprehensive review would be impossible (Case 2002). Wilson (1999) suggests that segments nest within one another; information behaviour the most macro, within which information-seeking is a subset (and information-searching within this still). The most prominent and well-established theories include those of Kuhlthau (1991), Dervin (1992), Wilson (1999), and Ellis (1989a, 1989b). Different models encompass different areas and depths; some "are of a summary type and others more analytic", serving "different research purposes" (Järvelin and Wilson 2003). Much work focuses on work or student information-seeking, although this has diversified in recent years. Kuhlthau (1991)'s "Information Search Process" maps a user's "constructive activity of finding meaning from information in order to extend his or her state of knowledge on a particular problem or topic", normally over multiple (rather than a single) information encounters. It was developed from study of students dealing with a specific assignment, the majority of which culminated in "a new understanding which may be presented or shared". The model has six stages common to her participants: *Initiation; Selection; Exploration; Formulation; Collection;* and finally *Presentation*. Over the course of the process, user thoughts developed from general and vague, to much more clearly focused. Affective elements also largely changed, from high levels of anxiety and uncertainty at the outset, through initial confusion and frustrations as topics were explored, to increased confidence and satisfaction at the conclusion. Dervin (1992) explains her Sense-making "has come to be used to refer to a theoretic net, a set of assumptions and propositions, and a set of methods which have been developed to study the making of sense that people do in their everyday experiences. Some people call it a theory, others a set of methods, others a methodology, others a body of

findings. In the most general sense, it is all of these." She stresses that human use of information and information systems needs to be studied from the perspective of the actor, not observer or system, as we must discover what is "real to them", not imposing orders or worlds on them. Sense-making focuses on user behaviour, and how people make sense of their experiences. It assumes that discontinuities or gaps occur in human reality; and individuals make sense of reality by bridging these gaps, seeking information to do so. She proposes that it is how the user defines their gap, and their situation (personal skills and experience) that may predict their information behaviour. This is often expressed as a triangle of situation, gap and help (or use), encompassing the users' experience.

The behavioural model of Ellis (1989a, 1989b) was developed from the information-seeking activities of academic social scientists at Sheffield University. Six main characteristics were identified: *Starting*, identifying an overview or key authors/studies in a particular area; *Chaining*, following citations or similar trails, both forwards and backwards; *Browsing* through relevant systems by author, journal subject terms or headings; *Differentiating*, or filtering material depending on topic, perspective, quality or methodology; *Monitoring*, maintaining current awareness of new material; and finally systematically *Extracting* the relevant materials. Subsequent work (2005) identified that *Verifying* and *Ending* also took place. Wilson (1999) describes the evolution of his model of information-seeking behaviour, developed over the previous 20 years. He classifies what he terms his 1996 version as both a "macro"-model, and "a global model of the field", which has expanded and gradually integrated different concepts, both within and outside information management, and to which certainly Kuhlthau's and Ellis's models can be related. From the context of an individual's information need, they are activated in some way (via both supportive and preventative intervening variables) to begin information-seeking (both active and passive). This feeds back through the individual's processing and use of that information to the beginning of the model.

Bates (1989) notes the increasing complexity of the online search environment, in terms of both sources and search techniques. She describes the concept of "berrypicking" techniques, analogous with harvesting berries in the wild, noting it closer to online search behaviour than traditional retrieval models. "Each new piece of information they encounter gives new

ideas and directions to follow and, consequently, a new conception of the query. At each stage they are not just modifying the search terms in order to get a better match for a single query. Rather the query itself (as well as the search terms used) is continually shifting...an evolving search". Using techniques detailed by Ellis above (and others), searches, sources, search terms and strategies change and depend "on the particular need" at that particular moment. She advocates that system design should take this into account, allowing users to search in familiar and effective ways.

Everyday Life Information-Seeking (ELIS) was first proposed by Savolainen (1995), who examined this in the context of Way (how an individual "orders" their time with hobbies, etc.) and Mastery (preserving this order; monitoring the difference between how things are and how they should be) of life. Noting that the vast majority of previous research into information-seeking had been carried out in occupational or educational settings, he argued that information-seeking outside the workplace deserved equal status and attention. Drawing largely from Dervin, he identified two "major dimensions": the seeking of orientating (monitoring, day-to-day awareness); and practical (to answer a particular question or problem) information. These were approached depending on the outlook (pessimist or optimistic; cognitive or affective). Previous work had shown people preferred "informal sources" and "rarely seek assistance from public libraries to solve their everyday problems", and Savolainen confirmed a tendency to prefer sources immediately available. He also stresses that there is not a dichotomy between work- and non-work-related information-seeking. Spink and Cole (2001) further note that occupational or academic information-seeking takes place in a more controlled environment, with definite beginning and end points, and a tangible end product. However ELIS "is fluid, depending on the motivation, education, and other characteristics of the multitude of ordinary people seeking information for a multitude of aspects of everyday life. It is definitionally unsystematic in order to incorporate counterproductive-type behaviour". Sonnenwald (1998) proposed that an information seeker is oriented by the sources visible to them on their "information horizon". Savolainen and Kari (2004) further define this as "a subjective map of source preferences where various sources and channels are given various positions such as central or peripheral". Nearer "zones" have the most visible, accessible and available sources; these are approached first, selected for reasons of saving time, and of "facilitating everyday life",

where networked sources, including the Internet, featured heavily. Perceived source quality was less important, suggesting the significance of the "principle of least effort" within ELIS. In middle zones, accessibility and quality are considered equally.

Martzoukou (2005) reviewed web information-seeking studies, observing that it was difficult to compare and generalise findings owing to great variations in methods and approaches. Quantitative studies cover a large scale but reveal little in depth about individual users, and mixed-method studies can be negated with an inappropriate balance of qualitative and quantitative methods. There were huge differences in definitions of 'novice' and 'expert', and different components of expertise that are not always taken into account. She suggests that it would be more beneficial to investigate and understand web information-seeking more holistically, instead of studying just one component part, such as situation or cognitive ability. Rieh (2003) used diaries and interviews to investigate how web-searching is affected by the home environment for broadband users. Participants reported searching more frequently at home, using a wider range of sites than at work. They searched for diverse (often new) subjects, "in shorter intervals and less intensely", and weren't particularly concerned with completing a search in one short session (searches were often considered successful if a further site or source of information was located). She discovered "general web search engines were not the first place that the subjects turned to when they needed to look for information"; beginning with specialised or targeted sites, aware they could obtain appropriate information, only turning to a search engine in the first instance if they had no lead on where to start. Jansen *et al* (1998) analysed over 51,000 search queries submitted to the Excite search engine by approximately 18,000 users. Queries were short, with sparse use of Boolean operators and other modifiers, with little query modification. Only one page of search results was examined by 58%. "History" was one of the more frequent search terms used after predominantly pornographic references. Pettigrew, Durrance and Unruh (2002) examined "how public libraries are using on-line community networks to facilitate the public's information-seeking and use in everyday situations". They suggest that there is no typical user of networked community information, with great diversity of search experience, and that an individual's situation and information need "provides the greater insight" into subsequent information-seeking and use. They uncovered types of information people were seeking, using various enabling characteristics: *Comparing; Connecting; Describing; Directing;*

Explaining; Promoting; Relating; Trusting; and *Verifying*. Expanded categories of information were available compared to pre-Internet, particularly in the areas of employment, service availability, and local history and genealogy. Users predominantly needed different types of information from multiple categories, as with Bates' berrypicking. Barriers encountered included poor retrieval by ineffective search engines, and subsequent information overload; poorly organised material with no cross-referencing; missing and out of date materials; dead links; and prohibitive language.

Jenkins, Corritore and Wiedenbeck (2003) explored differences in web information-seeking by nurses, both web novices and experts, some of whom had additional osteoporosis expertise. Web novices (regardless of domain expertise level) unsurprisingly took longest to locate information, had difficulty navigating, and were often distracted by pictures and images. Double novices would visit one site then return to search results; those with some domain knowledge briefly navigated within a site, making some attempt to evaluate the information. Web experts with no domain knowledge were confident, searched quickly and efficiently, and explored destination sites much further through hyperlinks. They evaluated the site provider, but had difficulty evaluating information. Double experts were most confident, using multiple search engines and modifiers/Boolean operators, browsing extremely deeply. They were fast and efficient at locating information and evaluating its value and level. Web novices were most likely to get lost and have a lower performance level, and the lack of web expertise was not compensated for by domain knowledge. Domain novices showed a low level of content evaluation. Hölscher and Strube (2000) similarly compared users with and without web expertise (and further domain knowledge in economics), finding quite a low success rate from all participants. Similar to Rieh (2003), "only 'double experts' initially tried to directly access web sites related to economics", whereas for all others the first instinct was to interrogate a search engine. "Web experts would type in the URL of their favourite search engine, while the 'double novices'" used the search box within their browser. Web novices were far more likely to alter their search (making "small and ineffectual changes") repeatedly rather than examine a document. Once a document has been examined, "double experts...are more likely to continue browsing", able to be flexible in their strategies. Double novices were more constrained, more likely to use their browser back button when they hit a "dead end". Slone (2003) noted that it had

become "more apparent that lack of experience yields similar" Internet search behaviour, irrespective of age. She observed that lack of both experience and a specific and/or motivating goal often leads users to abandon seeking information from the Internet.

Mansourian (2006) addresses users' *coping strategies in web searching*, and how they adapt when they are not immediately successful in finding information. He identified both passive (giving up; goal modification to fit the situation) and active strategies. Active included: revising strategies (altering search queries or information source, including printed sources); seeking help (from friends or information intermediaries, either for advice or to carry out the search on their behalf); or postponing the search until another time. He suggested that the level of importance (or interest level) of the search to a user impacts on the level of effort involved, and the number of coping strategies employed in order to ensure success. Foster and Ford (2003) aimed to build a picture of *serendipity in information-seeking*, identifying academic awareness of the phenomenon and its importance, if still a "fuzzy" concept. Serendipity can relate to either information encountered by chance, or new information with unexpectedly high value. The chances of serendipity occurring could be increased with various strategies, e.g. shelf-browsing, and could also be realised more effectively with "certain attitudes and strategic decisions". Toms (2000) discusses serendipitous information retrieval, within the "context of browsing or searching a digital information space", when users instinctively follow topics and items of interest to them. He notes the perceived value in this type of discovery, but considers that further provision for this must be incorporated into information systems.

"Serious Leisure" is defined by Stebbins (2009) as "the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer core activity that people find so substantial, interesting, and fulfilling, they launch on a (leisure) career centred on acquiring and expressing a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience". He specifies "six distinctive qualities": perseverance; a career-path (albeit non-remunerated); effort in acquiring "knowledge, training, experience, skill"; personal affective benefits such as enrichment and satisfaction; an ethos of a distinct social world of the activity; and a strong sense of identification with the pursuit. Urban (2007) interprets this further: "serious leisure activities are not necessarily "fun" or "play" in the traditional sense (although they might be), but are activities that

provide participants with other kinds of tangible benefits and rewards. In addition, serious leisure goes beyond an individual activity and suggests a longer-term commitment, participation in a community and social recognition for their engagement. Often participants in serious leisure activities expend a great deal of time and money in pursuit of their interests, such as on travel, on resources or equipment needed or on collecting". Culbertson, Ernest and Level (2005) noted that users seeking information for recreational activities have far greater access to such information outside library settings (both online and through other printed media), and would now infrequently access a library branch for this information. Users demonstrated an awareness of variables in information quality and validity, and they recommend that libraries still obtain appropriate print information, but facilitate access to library-assessed and vetted online resources for such activities.

Duff and Cherry (2000) reported on a user evaluation of the *Early Canadia* collection, which consisted of materials in paper, microfiche and digital formats. Paper was preferable for reasons of authenticity, but over 75% felt the digital versions were most useful in their research. They sought better functionality from the web version, including more search options and faster printing of documents; and more source information regarding digitised documents. Duff, Craig and Cherry (2004) investigated how the digital environment affects preferred format of research materials for Canadian historians, similarly finding that 90% unsurprisingly preferred the original format of documents. Use of electronic reproductions was increasing, considered more convenient, allowing greater access; but complaints were raised of poor production, vulnerability to alterations, or introduction of additional error. Additional concerns were raised regarding a lack of accompanying information, which would identify and contextualise electronic reproductions; and about missing records or gaps within a series of records. It was "extremely important to ensure confidence in the digital copy", and quality of production, quality and depth of finding aids and accompanying information must increase for the promise of digital formats to be realised. Fachry, Kamps and Zhang (2010) investigated the impact of summaries in archival finding aids on whether a user clicks through from them to view collections and/or records returned from electronic searches. In assessing relevance of a collection, title and abstract were considered most important. At individual item level, users relied much more on query-based

elements, and how the item related to their search terms. Overall, the abstract and the context it provided had the most influence in the decision.

Duff and Johnson (2002) identified four major information-seeking activities historians undertook in archives: orientation (to a new archive, finding aid, source, or collection); searching for a known material (item, collection or form); accumulating contextual knowledge; and identifying relevant material. Some activities could fall into more than one category, particularly the latter two (emphasising the vital connection between context and identifying relevance); and often occurred "simultaneously and in no particular order". Names were commonly used as an access point into materials or collections. Duff and Johnson (2001) analysed e-mail reference questions to archives to observe how users expressed and structured their information needs. They identified eight categories of enquiry: administrative/directional information (contact details and services) (11%); specific fact-finding (10%); general material-finding (17%); availability of materials in a specific form (8%); availability of a known item (4%), request for service (27%); consultation (10%), or user education (13%). Enquirers used "proper names, dates, places, subject, form, and, occasionally, events" in requests, and were far less specific when seeking general subject information. Requests for (particularly photocopying) services were probably related to the addition of indexes and finding aids to archival web sites, and it was noted that the provision of online order forms and price lists (or better linkage) would reduce such enquiries. Duff (2002) advocated developing systems with search functions that would enable researchers to search for material using the terms they know including names, places, dates, form, and subjects; allowing for browsing as well as targeted searching. Web sites should cater for differing levels of experience, and could be tailored for particular user groups, e.g. gather together resources frequently used by genealogists, or for schoolchildren. Archives should not only provide information for researchers, but "strive to educate the public about archival concerns", such as authenticity and reliability of records, care and preservation.

Skov (2009) examined user goals within virtual museums, categorising users as either collectors (the largest group) or liberal art enthusiasts. Museum objects were collectors' primary interest, with the historical context being secondary; they mainly need factual,

object-related information, photographs, and provenance information in their leisure tasks. Conversely, liberal arts enthusiasts primarily sought a broader historical interest. He expected extremely exploratory information-seeking patterns, with "ill-defined information needs reflecting exploratory and semantically open search tasks"; this was partially reflected in the results, with 30% of respondents not seeking anything specific; however, the remaining needs were surprisingly well defined. Sexton *et al.* discuss the importance of involving users at many stages of resource and information system design. LEADERS aimed to produce a system, which linked the information and context found in Encoded Archival Description (EAD)-based finding aids with digital surrogates of archival materials. In the initial picture of archival users (2004a), they were segmented using three categories: motivation for archive use (professional, educational, personal leisure, personal obligation); primary research interest (individuals/families/organisations, places, time periods, and topic); and familiarity with aspects of archive research (own research interest, finding aids, archival documents, the Internet). Those researching for personal leisure were the largest group (60%); 64% of those were researching individuals, families or organisations. 97% of all users qualified their research by a specific time period, and 93% were at least reasonable familiar with their research subject. Overall, 73% were familiar with finding aids, 58% with source materials, and 79% with the Internet. As a group, personal leisure users were least confident with archives and research, although not necessarily detrimentally so. Professional users were most confident, except where educational users were more confident in Internet use. They later (2004b) describe user testing of a demonstration version of the interface. Professionals were keen to have "as many retrieval options as possible", whereas personal leisure researchers preferred a simple interface.

2.3   *Family Historians*

Although they were a neglected area of study at the commencement of the present research, genealogists, family historians, their characteristics and research behaviour have attracted more attention recently, across many disciplines such as psychology and tourism. Increasing interest within information fields has largely emerged from archival science, although this work is of high relevance as local studies are more commonly combined with archival services. Sinko and Peters (1983) conducted one of the first surveys into genealogists at Chicago's Newbury Library, seeking to evaluate reference services, prepare appropriate user

education initiatives, and improve access to the local and family history collection. Whilst 52.8% of users lived within fifty miles, 22.8% reported living over 300 miles away. Females were slightly more dominant, with an average age of 47.9 years. Genealogists were largely self-taught and worked independently of any society or organisation. The authors found a large degree of satisfaction with the reference services offered (remotely where used), and received positive reactions to a video introduction to the collection. They concluded that genealogists were diverse, with "different degrees of interest and different needs", and user education must take many forms. Duff and Johnson (2003) also specifically investigated genealogists' information behaviour, interviewing predominantly professional and experienced genealogists, confident with finding aids and use of the Internet; consequently the described behaviour largely reflects professional/expert practices. They identify three (non-linear) stages of genealogical research: the gathering of names, dates and relationships; gathering further detailed information about ancestors; and placing ancestors in the context of society at that time. Experts identify that background knowledge of a time period is key to identifying possible sources, suggesting that the "novice genealogist must reframe his or her request for information about people to a request for information about record forms and creators…" essentially learn to "think like a genealogist." They need to translate information requests into a record which may contain the details they require; "system-related material that just happens to have people's names in it". They describe research as iterative, and noted that participants employed a number of strategies in their searching, which they had no hesitation in changing when required. Strategies could be repeated for new searches. They search for information by name, place, and date, often browsing to identify relevant records. They suggest that novices find "provenance-based finding aids confusing and frustrating to use", which didn't support the way they sought information. An ideal system would "support a search by name, geographic area, and a range of dates. It would also contain digitized images of the original documents". Genealogists were more likely to consult amongst themselves than with archivists and librarians.

Fulton (2006) highlights the importance of leisure time for amateur Irish genealogists, and the enjoyment gained from non-work-related information-seeking. She characterises genealogy as serious leisure (Stebbins 2009), where researchers are "commonly retired" and "have time to devote themselves to lifelong learning of information and technical skills

needed to navigate the complex maze of resources that support genealogical inquiry".
Participants devoted a great deal of time to their information-seeking, commonly two to ten
hours per week, but also up to thirty. The Internet was used by 92%, both as a source and as
a means of communicating with other researchers. Public libraries were also important, in
addition to other government institutions, family records centres, and historical societies,
and genealogical associations for assistance. Family members, librarians, other researchers
and repository staff were most important. Researchers gained considerable pleasure from
their hobby, which played a "significant role" in their lives, and as a means of leaving the
results of their research for future family members. Participants saw genealogy as more than
leisure; they considered themselves fanatics, where finding one piece of information could
spiral into a continuous search. Fulton further emphasises the central role positive affect
takes in genealogical information-seeking (2009a). In addition to those brought from work
and everyday-life, participants are likely to develop additional skills throughout the course
of their research in order to further their hobby, enjoying the challenge of lifelong learning.
Those from "research" professions felt pleasure from the connections between the two
disciplines. They were desperate to experience the 'actual' research themselves wherever
possible, rather than delegate this to others. The speed of access to information retrieval
offered by the Internet seems to heighten both the thrill of the chase and desire for further
research. The social "community" is also important for researchers; interactions with other
researchers play a "positive role" in the experience; whether for information exchange, as
with distant relatives, or just as "like-minded" researchers.

Yakel (2004) describes genealogy and family history as a particularly interesting example of
ELIS: researchers extensively using libraries and archives; developing social networks to
support information-seeking; and "collecting and managing information in the present as
well as the need to pass on the information in the future". Through interviews with amateur
researchers, she identified their needs as both informational and affective, searching for
meaning amongst records. All were members of family history societies, and did not
consider libraries or archives as part of their education process. She distinguishes between
genealogy, the search for ancestors, and family history, the gathering of information about
them and their lives. She found that a shift in information-seeking takes place when someone
moves from being a genealogist to being a family historian, alongside a change from

conceptualising the hobby as a project to a "continuous practice", much like Savolainen (1995)'s distinction between seeking orienting or practical information. Libraries must meet the information needs of both. All used the Internet, which strengthens their social networks, whether locally or widely spread. She notes that the strengths of their networks were "best demonstrated through two core ethical precepts...information sharing and giving back". Fulton (2009b) also talks about the importance of information sharing within her participants' genealogical communities. In addition to information acquisition, they found the Internet was extremely important for communication between researchers. Mailing lists and fora were seen as extremely effective, allowing researchers to "cast a wide net", seeking potential relatives researching the same lines. The Internet also enabled a social community of family historians. "Sharing information was not only considered a positive social outcome to communication with another genealogist, but reciprocal information sharing was expected" as a social norm; any subsequent sharing depended on this. Family historians were more appreciative of "documented research" than narrative; this also established the credibility of a researcher. Fulton also identified super-information sharers, who could operate individually or within a group, often active on lists or in societies. "They are motivated to take a lead in information dissemination because of their intense interest in the hobby and research activities. For some, the sharing function provides fulfilment beyond examining one's own family tree. For others, super sharing is an act of reciprocity", giving back to the genealogical community.

Francis (2004) adapted Kuhlthau (1991)'s Information Search Process into a Genealogy Search Process (GSP), described as circular in nature as opposed to linear. "Once the patron reaches the point that they can no longer obtain accurate, pertinent information they must return to an earlier point in the research process, review their information and determine a new direction for the GSP". Stages identified were: the desire to search for ancestors (initiation); search for a specific family or individual begins (selection); research process (exploration); concentrate on specific records or geographical areas (formulation); gain skills; gather data (collection); change direction of research, new records or locations; closure (presentation). She found that librarians were most useful providing advice and encouragement in the exploration and formulation stages, where researchers can either became enthralled with the subject, or give up through lack of progress. She also noted that

researchers may never find a particular piece of information they are seeking, perhaps never experiencing the positive effects associated with closure.

Lambert (1996) examines family historians' relations not only to the past, but also the present and future. He notes the special significance attached to the past for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the LDS or Mormon Church), and their significant contribution to the genealogy field in terms of the *IGI*. In exploring reasons for pursuing the hobby, he found four more prominent than others: understanding of the self via one's roots (present); "getting to know one's ancestors are people" (past); posterity (future); and "restoring ancestors to the family's memory" (past). Only 6% were particularly concerned with rich and famous ancestors, showing a change in reasons for tracing family histories since "older" times. Fulfilling the role of the family historian contributed to researchers' self-esteem and identity. Drake (2001), explored the psychology of genealogists, finding the majority "were female (72.2%), with at least one child (85.7%) and were currently married (78.6%)". Ages ranged from 18 to 85 years, averaging 54. The term "family historian" was preferred to genealogist. Dead people collector, lineage specialist, treasure hunter, tree climber and super-sleuth were also suggested. Frazier (2001) examined the increasing importance of both genealogy and Internet use within tourism. Surveying email list members, respondents were predominantly (73%) female (complaints of "spamming" were received from male researchers), aged 50-64, with males "significantly older". 73.1% had begun research before the Internet, which had increased research-related travel in 78% of cases. Interestingly it had not reduced cost (67.9%) or time spent on research (98.5%), but had increased efficiency (68.6%) or access to materials (60.8%). He noted frustrations among users when more information was online for some states than others. Younger researchers and researchers who are higher earners are more likely to plan a trip via the Internet, but this tended to be to local sites rather than further afield.

Bishop (2003) developed a "picture of how genealogical researchers assign meaning to the information and individuals they discover in their work." They research at home, in libraries or genealogical societies; communicating with family members and other researchers, "as well as the growing range of tools available on the Internet". Computers and genealogical software were used to manage information, but this was not yet relied upon; likewise there

was not complete confidence in Internet information. Research is often incorporated into trips for other purposes: family members, cemeteries, and local/national repositories. His researchers felt a responsibility "to past and future generations and to any interested parties", in constructing accurate family narratives. Information was constantly evaluated to determine how it would be incorporated into past research. They felt they were writing the "history about ordinary people"; not concerned with past status , more "learn[ing] about the people who preceded me, warts and all, and try[ing] to understand the times in which they lived and why they may have done what they did." Key motivations were the placing ancestors and families in their historical context, and discovering "why you are the way you are" through this personalisation of history. Bishop (2005) examined how genealogists were portrayed in media coverage, drawing similar pictures of the journalist and the family historian, in the gathering of facts and subsequent crafting and re-telling of a (family) story. Genealogy is commonly described as obsessional, habit-forming, where participants were hooked, or charged with psychic energy. Equated with solving a puzzle, where "every new fact, every new relative heightens the passion". He also noted that journalists can provide a stage for keen family historians to present their stories.

Butterworth (2006) sets out "leisure" information-seeking and retrieval within personal (incorporating both family and local) history research. He unexpectedly discovered "users tended to have very good, well defined research questions, whereas we had expected them to have only vague, badly expressed ideas about their research"; later surmising that this resulted from a great deal of experience with sources and research. Although rarely collaborative, research was often social, attending society meetings or researching in small groups, fulfilling the purpose of developing "skill and task knowledge". They showed a high level of motivation for research and considered their audience, whether for current/future generations or just themselves. He warns against the assumption that "leisure" researchers equate to a low quality or amateurish approach, and noted their behaviour may be hard to capture by traditional methodologies, due to unpredictable periods of research inactivity. Aube and Ettori (2005), considering how the Internet has affected genealogical research in France, discovered that 91% of their questionnaire respondents had adopted the Internet for their research. Two-thirds used the Internet to learn about research methods and sources. New opportunities brought by the Internet included the search engine *Google*, location of

genealogical information, and communicating with other researchers via mailing lists and fora (the main change in genealogical practice for 85%). Ninety percent also used genealogical software to manage data and results. Researchers were predominantly aware of its limits, and of the danger of fabricated or false information; which may spur them on to be even more rigorous in their Internet research.

Case (2008) suggests that medical information collected by genealogists could, through researchers' extensive online communities, be utilised in public health promotion. Following a general telephone survey of US households, over half the respondents "reported that someone in their family collects ancestral medical data". Information was commonly gathered concerning "blindness" (81.3%); "asthma" (70%); "any other major disease" (82.6%); and cause-of-death information. Follow-up interviews revealed that 43% always, and 26% "almost always", recorded an ancestor's cause of death where available; 9% never did; the source was typically a death certificate (61%) or obituary (39%). 30% "always" or "almost always", and 61% "sometimes" collected information on major illnesses, most often from personal documentation (e.g. letters), or more reliably from death certificates or other official documents. 86% could identify generational health trends; heart disease, cancers, etc. Some reported they collected health information simply because they collected every fact they could find.

Garrett (2010) investigated the effects of the giant commercial website *Ancestry.com* on genealogical research and archives. Many genealogists view the *Ancestry* site as a necessary tool in their research, and participants used *Ancestry* more than other genealogical sites. However, only a few actually have subscriptions with the company, using instead the subscription available at their local repository. Researchers liked *Ancestry*'s ease of use, speed, and numerous collections, helping nearly half the participants locate ancestors they were previously at an impasse with. Aside from records databases, "they may use the message boards to locate and exchange information with distant relatives". Despite these benefits, researchers felt the site would "never eliminate the need to visit physical repositories", to verify documents, or access those not in digital form. "Only two participants indicated they visit the archives less because of *Ancestry* and sixteen said they actually visit it more". She suggested that further digitization collaborations between *Ancestry* and

repositories would open the latter up further. Skinner (2010) investigated library staff and patrons' resource use and satisfaction by genealogists in Iowa. Researchers sought a wide range of resources, both raw data and deeper information; "while users cited the importance of vital records and raw data, newspapers and personal documents were equally important". They preferred websites that were more genealogy-orientated; *Ancestry* being the most popular. They were largely satisfied with both libraries/institutions and Internet sites. She speculates that exact preferences may relate to users' research objectives. A greater experience level seemed to demonstrate a wider knowledge of resources. Library staff received appreciative user feedback regarding their assistance. Both users and staff suggested that digitisation of resources and subsequent searchability was the best way to increase user access.

Kuglin (2004) examined New Zealand genealogists' information-seeking in libraries. "With an increasing population of genealogy researchers, librarians are attempting to develop services that will promote researcher independence while maintaining user satisfaction". Respondents were very experienced researchers (87% over five years) and frequent library users who began their research to discover their own past, or to pass on their history to future generations. They learned research techniques by "doing", with some, but little librarian input. Shelf-browsing was very important at all stages of research, and preferable to library catalogues; researchers would seek help from staff very early if they could not find an item they were looking for. She suggests that taking account of genealogists' search patterns could improve catalogue functionality. Gardiner (2004) investigated Staffordshire family historians and Internet use within their research. She found a slight bias towards female researchers, aged over 55, with 63% using the Internet. This was seen to be beneficial within research, with remote resource access most important, but convenience, cost and time savings also. They discovered resources via search engines, but also through other researchers and genealogy publications, and considered the authority of a source most important in source selection. Those using the Internet at that time considered it to be an extension to their research, and warned about those who felt that all research could be conducted that way.

Richards (2006) investigated information needs of family historians at libraries in Derbyshire and Warrington. Their greatest motivation for family history was to construct an accurate family tree, followed by finding geographical origins, and learning about ancestors' lives, passing on information to future generations. They were also interested in wider historical contexts, and finding out what the lives of their ancestors were like. Other data indicated that a great deal of satisfaction is gained; "mental exercise", "detective work", and satisfying curiosity. In terms of sources of information, libraries were the most popular location for research (89%, but was the location of data collection); living relatives (88%), archives (72%) and record offices (70%) were also highly used. Whilst some customers lacked awareness about library services, a much larger proportion were happy with the service provided, finding computer courses particularly useful. Subscriptions were preferred to pay-per-view sites, but family historians are often frustrated with having to pay to access information at all. The most important quality of a resource was reliability, followed by 'free/value for money'. She recommends that libraries can be of assistance helping people access websites, "raising awareness...of what different websites offer", and making referrals to family history societies. Targeted marketing could help make customers aware of the stock and services libraries offer. A library subscription to *Ancestry* could substantially reduce costs for researchers.

Gill (2007) investigates "non-traditional" researchers, who may exhibit different behaviour from that found in previous studies; members of two East Derbyshire adult education classes. Participants were newer to genealogical research and not members of family history societies. She observed the "tangents" researchers can spontaneously follow, and also noted that genealogy and family history are not necessarily a "mutually exclusive" divide. Personal pleasure was the primary motivation for research, and they "spoke about their successes and failures in strongly emotional terms". They found their family history course highly motivating, and a good social network. Despite not fitting the "stereotypical image of family historians", subjects' behaviour and experiences were largely comparable with previous studies, except that "they are likely to prefer online research to the use of archives and libraries". Although a significant number of the group had no formal qualifications and were largely elderly, through the classes they gained ICT proficiencies, and high levels of information literacy and critical evaluation.

Recent work in sociology by Kramer (2010) examined the emotional consequences of family history research. Although she reported positivity from most researchers, rediscovering and passing on memories in the future, nearly 15% reported encountering hostility and conflict during the course of their research, either with the past, or with family members in the present. The main causes included: discovering "unwelcome" information, relatives' non-disclosure of information, exchanging inaccurate details, neglecting close family relationships, and encountering hostile relatives. "Researchers could open up a Pandora's box of secrets and skeletons, such as finding there are family issues around paternity, illegitimacy or marriage close to birth of children, criminality, health and mental health and previously unknown humble origins". One of her participants commented; "of course, nobody minds about that these days, but she feels deeply ashamed." This work was widely reported in the local and national press (Radnedge 2010; Adams 2010; Thomas 2010). The "wider genealogy community in the UK" rejected this view and gathered in genealogy's defence (My Heritage Blog 2010), enjoying the discovery of "skeletons" in their family closets; "I've found big surprises, shocks even, but that just made it more interesting. It gave me a lot more insight into daily life for people in those times", clearly feeling strongly that their research was worth any risk. From a social work perspective, Umfleet (2009) examined genealogy and generativity, finding it useful for regaining "generational memory", and reducing social isolation amongst older adults. "Generative acts of others", such as listening to family stories, or receiving research from a relative, initially sparked an interest in genealogy; discovering family photographs also triggered research. Psychological, cognitive, and mental health benefits were identified in their descriptions, including feelings of value, gratification, satisfaction, accomplishment, all contributing to improved self-esteem. Positive support from friends and family induced positive feelings in researchers and conversely negative feeling when this support was absent. They were also benefits of creating new social communities, both of fellow researchers and "new ancestors".

Yakel and Torres (2007) assert that "access to records, identifying information in records and transforming it into personal meaning, interactions with others in the genealogical process, and the re-creation of the family archives define genealogists as a community of records. Access for genealogists is more of a search for meaning than for documents". Genealogists

have "developed their own social systems and networks to support their needs" in seeking, collecting, managing, analysing and preserving information, largely without influence or contact from archivists or librarians. They identified that family historians undertake group problem solving, differing from simply asking for help or advice, and not observed in other communities. Researchers also invest substantial emotion and personal involvement in information-seeking and the results of their research. Tucker (2009) ethnographically explored the "influences and processes" of family historians and heritage album makers. She notes that album makers' work is more largely finite, creating individual projects, whereas family historians see their work as never ending, as an ongoing process. Family historians also concentrate on context and evidence from records and "genealogical proof"; album makers create something more personal. Both are optimistic that their work is a constructive hobby, leaving a positive legacy, with benefits for both themselves and for the social communities they form. The Internet further facilitates their practice and stores their creations, and creates a social network. Archivists must be proactive, raising awareness of family history and must "consider how family historians and album makers could choose to link such works to public records". Web 2.0 technology might be used for this purpose, as album makers and family historians already work in such spaces via various photo-sharing sites.

2.4   Local Studies Users

Williams (1996) describes local studies service users as seeking out the micro-history as opposed to macro. He suggests that it is a personal connection that inspires much research. "As far as most of us are concerned, the time and effort needed to reveal details of the lives of past individuals might not be forthcoming, had we not a personal stake in the business". Reid and Macafee (2007) propose a three-way relationship, or a "tripartite paradigm" in local studies librarianship: the collections, the investigations and the users. They identify the users of local studies as enthusiastic and tenacious; "their commitment to their subject or to their locality is the engine of local studies". Users are continually "actively engaged" with local studies materials.

Rosemary Boyns (1999) is widely credited with highlighting genealogists and family historians in the archival literature, observing their absence there when "far from invisible in practice". In a survey of local authority (LA) archives (including record offices, libraries and local history centres), she found repositories could often not give definite figures regarding the proportion of their visitors researching for that purpose; indeed 11 offices could not estimate any figure whatsoever. Estimates ranged between 10 and 90%; however, few repositories estimated less than 40%. Over 80% had acquired national genealogical sources specifically for genealogists, and 88% produced a research guidance leaflet. For the majority, attitudes were changing more favourably towards family historians; "local authority repositories are accountable to those that fund them, and they should serve all the public, irrespective of research interest". The "sheer size of the family history user group" caused issues for provision of assistance, with implications for staffing; however they can equally provide justification for the service. Old attitudes still remain in some cases where the collection emphasis is on records rather than users.

Campbell and Mills (1995), reporting on a user survey at Bolton Archives and Local Studies, found 60% of respondents were male, with 38% in employment (the greatest proportion), 25% full-time students and 25% retired. Local area residents made up 63%, but they noted that the survey was conducted in February, and that travelling visitors were more frequent in the summer months. There was a high level of satisfaction with both the service and the helpfulness of staff. In terms of usage of the collection, most (40%) were engaged in family history research, with 30% researching for either a school or university project. Matkin and Gordon (2000) found that 75% of local studies users in Derbyshire were local residents, and were surprised at the low percentage (3%) of foreign visitors, but felt these needed proportionally more assistance. Some 58% were researching family history, the most popular subject. They preferred staff assistance, which 85% found helpful, although they also sought more written information about the collection. Employed users felt that an electronic catalogue was the priority in digitising aspects of the collection; whilst retirees felt digital maps would be more useful. A survey of local studies visitors in Warwickshire (Insley 2007) found 70% had used the collection before, sometimes the only place to obtain certain information; with the highest level of awareness for books and local newspapers, the lowest for website information. 55% found the information they were looking for, 34% in part, only

3% did not; 61% asked for help from a staff member. Overall there was a high level of satisfaction with the service, staff knowledge and staff helpfulness. Only 20% were aware of and had visited the Warwickshire Local Studies[85] Website.

2.5   *Local Studies for Family History*

Alongside other heritage professionals, local studies act as gatekeepers to local history (Reid and Macafee 2007). They have a clear role in encouraging good practice in research and lifelong learning. "It is crucial also that the user be aware of 'problems' with particular sources (e.g. omissions in Old Parish Registers, biases in local newspapers, myths perpetuated from one frequently-quoted but inaccurate source), and the importance of corroborating sources wherever possible. The sophisticated level of information literacy required for a successful local studies investigation now has to be extended to e-resources, providing opportunities to cultivate ICT skills". However, they must "engage in real conversations with their customers", and not patronise users. Davidsson (2004) asserts that is the role and duty of public libraries "to provide themselves with the knowledge and ability to assist" genealogists and family historians in the library. They should highlight items in the collection that would be useful to researchers, and make available local indexes, especially to newspapers, ideally electronically. Other possible services would be: a lookup, research and photocopy service (time and staff permitting); subscription to relevant electronic databases; or online reference facility. Limits may have to be imposed on these to local residents or otherwise as circumstances determine.

A strained relationship has been noted by several authors, between family history researchers and librarians (equally evident in the archival literature). *The Truth about Reference Librarians* (Manley 1996), although obviously written from a comedic standpoint, describes family genealogists as "pests", doing nothing to foster a better relationship or dispel stereotypes. However, in recent years there have been as many articles and letters rejecting and condemning this attitude. Reid (2003) contributes "if local history was once regarded as an inferior branch of history then family history was once dismissed as little more than an entertaining sideline with some librarians regarding 'the family tree people' as

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[85] Warwickshire County Council, 2011. *Local studies and family history services.* [online] Available at: http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/localstudies [Accessed 16 July 2011]

little more than a nuisance". He asserts this is no longer a tenable position in the digital age. Erickson (2002) describes the strain as "unnecessary and unhelpful", noting that "genealogists only differ significantly from the general public in so far as they have the potential to suck up massive amounts of time". He suggests upfront disclosure and description of genealogical resources could result in less time-consuming speculative enquires. Collections should have the goal of "providing appropriate research opportunities to an appropriate audience"; genealogists should be welcomed on that basis.

Ralston (1986) raises a common concern of librarians that "many family historians...have no concept of either what they expect to achieve, or what they might realistically achieve in a library". However, the individual nature of each family's past means that the first part of the statement is part of the nature of the research, and therefore librarians should assess each enquiry as an individual. He observes from a New Zealand survey (Davey 1985 referenced in Ralston 1986) that success rates in finding materials there differed greatly between genealogists (36% found, 53% partially found, 11% not found) and "standard academic" researchers (76% found, 24% partially found); perhaps reference librarians and other staff are more comfortable when they can give an uncomplicated answer to an enquiry. He also stresses the importance of referrals, and that these highly-motivated patrons "will remain a chore as long as the librarian remains uncertain of this user group's needs", and will "become a challenge when the librarian accepts them as a positive force for improving the image, the resources, and the fulfilment of the library". Haynes (1998) agrees that genealogists can have unrealistic expectations of repositories and research, but suggests that librarians can assist in changing this by guiding researchers in resource use and research techniques. She also notes the past "love/hate" relationship with family historians, observing that the attitudes held by practitioners will affect the quality of the reference service given to researchers. There is a responsibility to provide for and assist genealogists, in the same way that there is for any patron, and not necessarily over and above.

Carothers (1983) observed that the "growing interest in family history is effecting a broad change in the attitude of librarians and archivist towards the genealogist and genealogical research", in a far more positive and constructive manner. Like Ralston (1996), she suggests friction occurs because librarians are often unsure of the best way to assist. Billeter (2001)

similarly suggests that librarians "don't want to admit their ignorance of the specialized resources genealogists use", not always familiar with their terminology. She advises practitioners to investigate local genealogical societies, other regional or state organisations, agencies, and repositories to which they can refer researchers where appropriate. Cooper (2005) notes that genealogists are sometimes too keen to share their findings about their family tree, when staff may not have the time or inclination to listen. It is perceived they take up too much time with complex enquiries where the answer is not "packaged neatly", or perhaps doesn't exist. She further suggests that genealogists can feel staff have no time for them, and can even be scared of librarians. Stahr (2003) notes the vast range of research expertise encountered by practitioners, from true novices to those "enticed by an increasing array of electronic records, but who sense there must be more to genealogy than the World Wide Web". Although librarians may feel overwhelmed by such a large user group with very specific needs, they "hold the key that unlocks the chest of genealogical resources", but more importantly, can impact the way the researchers learn about research methodology and ethics.

Following this, Paul (1995) suggests "staff are not offering the best possible service to students of family history because they are not adequately trained...local collections in public libraries are an essential resource for local and family historians for which there is no substitute. Staff are consulted, generally without warning, on all aspects and periods of local and family history...asked for detailed advice on primary sources, their whereabouts and their use... [and] identify secondary sources, often in considerable depth." Staff require detailed knowledge of the local collection and services on offer, and awareness of local associated services and collections, no matter their status within the organisation. He further suggests that full-time staff should consider a qualification in genealogy and family history, because local history and genealogy are not consistently dealt with in library schools, and other training opportunities (such as day courses) are extremely fragmentary. He suggests library authorities should take career development and training more seriously, to maintain standards and professional status. Jon Webster (2005) stresses the need for academic training, owing to the sheer complexity of family history sources involved. He highlights the near invisibility of the libraries, archives and researchers behind the stories in *WDYTYA?*"[giving] the impression that a complex multi-faceted piece of genealogical research is a 'piece of

cake'". Barber (2007) also reinforces training needs; "Online resources such as *Ancestry* are available in a growing number of libraries, extending the need for training for all frontline staff. To make the most of *Ancestry*, users require not online IT skills, but knowledge of the sources and how to use them for family history research". Essential knowledge for local studies workers must include an "understanding of the range of local history and family history resources; use and interpretation of primary resources; [and] types of material held by other heritage providers". She also suggests that local studies practitioners may soon become an "endangered species", and asserts the need to retain the "unique value" of local studies, whether collections continue to be managed by local studies practitioners or not.

Latham (2003) notes that family historians "can be some of the most exasperating and yet engaging patrons to frequent a library". Longmore (2000) observes that genealogists make up the majority of record office and national archive users; 95% at the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS). He describes the business elements of the development of online services at the GROS, highlighting the rise in interest in genealogical tourism. There was a desire to get genealogically-relevant records online, making these as widely available as possible. The potential business model could recoup some of the costs of digitisation, as well as raise the profile of the GROS. He suggested that UK users were dominated by the elderly, and those able to visit repositories during working hours. "[I]s this because it is *only* the elderly who are interested in genealogy, or is it that we as a profession have made it more difficult for other groups of people, particularly those in full-time employment, to pursue this hobby? Are we possibly constraining our own market potential?" Customer expectations of services and information provision were rising, especially if charging was involved, and it was the job of the profession to respond. He describes the development of *Scots Origins* (the predecessor of *ScotlandsPeople)*, "a pioneering UK government application of e-commerce and a world first in the genealogy field", giving access to the indexes of Scottish civil registration records and some census records. Certificates could then be ordered online. He suggests this will "sow seeds" of interest and increase genealogical tourism. *ScotlandsPeople* (Carmichael 2008) has subsequently become a world leader in e-genealogy provision, now featuring images of records. Miller (2007) gives details of the *ScotlandsPeople Public Library Project*, begun by East Dunbartonshire libraries in 2006. Following training of staff on the *ScotlandsPeople* website, and a number of family history taster sessions, the scheme allows

users to buy starter and top-up vouchers from libraries. This has been extremely well received by users who have found on-hand library assistance with searching invaluable, especially those less confident in computer use. It also provides the option of paying for the site credits in cash. This has since been rolled out across Scottish libraries (Aberdeen City Libraries 2010 and others).

A number of authors stressed the benefits of cooperation with genealogical and family history societies. Gibson (1982) highlighted the great importance of their indexing work to the cause of genealogical research long before electronic records. Hawkins (1998) observed "genealogical societies educate their members and the public about genealogical research and also develop an awareness of the importance of preserving family history. Some societies work with their local libraries to provide improved access to resources by indexing records." Litzer (1997) notes that, although genealogists can place heavy demands on local history libraries, there can be mutual benefits in collection access and development, referrals, reference services and educational events. Libraries often house the collections of genealogical societies. Many societies provide volunteers for indexing newspapers or other records, or donate or raise money for new library acquisitions. Societies accept referrals from the library for enquiries, whether directly, or through volunteer staffing. McKay (2002) also observes that as a motivated group, they can lobby political decision-makers on behalf of repositories in coordinated numbers, although this may be more useful in the USA. Robinson (2006) suggests that local studies needs to capitalise on the increased interest from family historians and other user groups, highlighting the vital importance of the collections to library management and local government officials, thus heightening their image and status.

Gregg (2002) examines the "functions of a modern local studies collection and of the role of local studies librarians in collecting, preserving, providing and promoting access to them by the community". Collections were now increasingly dealing with online information, and were tasked with ensuring that users "feel comfortable with the tools and strategies needed for online searching for authoritative information, while at the same time reminding them that the net will not produce the complete answer to every question". Staff are vitally important to the user experience, and need to seek opportunities to demonstrate the value of what they do. Local studies' preservation of and access to users' heritage may encourage

better preservation and labelling/indexing practices of their own photographs and family archives. Smith (2002) notes that enquiries, fundamental to local studies, are increasing year on year, largely owing to the increased visibility of collections, and the growth in use of email. Services need to be sensitive to the needs of users, and develop strategies to deal timeously with all enquiries; these might include FAQs about the collection, services and facilities; charging, or referral to professional researchers or other agencies; and staff training. Barber (2002a), writing about local studies collection *Materials,* notes that there can often be an overlap of resources, where local studies libraries were established before record offices and archives. She notes "it is an unwritten rule that printed works are classified as local studies", whereas manuscripts are considered archival materials.

Parton (2003) investigated the impact of continued growth in family history on the management of staff and services in local studies libraries and record offices. He discovered this impact was largely positive, but the extent was dependent on the nature and management of individual repositories, suggesting that the impact has been greater on record offices. Although collections were becoming more accessible, smaller repositories with fewer staff occasionally struggled to keep up service levels. "Family historians are raising the profile of libraries and archives at a time of disintermediation and the threat of closure and are allowing these repositories to meet valuable targets in levels of usage, lifelong learning and social inclusion. Some survey respondents even went so far as to suggest that these users were ensuring their very survival...also helping to ease access to resources by providing valuable voluntary indexing work..." Staffing roles had changed, with non-professional staff more frequently dealing with enquiries and referrals. Awareness existed of the need to offer effective services to genealogists, and develop education programmes, particularly for online resources, which respondents had suggested were "actually encouraging virtual and tangible visitors". The more negative impact is the difficulty experienced in meeting the growth with an adequate level of service, as demand can steal time from important backroom processes. More staff training was also needed, as was the need to promote the importance of assisting family history researchers and raising their profile in the professional literature.

2.6   *Resources and Digitisation*

Much of the US professional literature is resource-based, and therefore of limited use in the present study. Balas (1992) observed the huge amount of information for family history researchers available on fora, CompuServe, mailing lists/listservs; although it was not research information *per se*, but rather software, research techniques, and chart templates. Although the information is out-of-date, it is indicative that similar information should still be available. Francis (2005) noted that although computers and the Internet have streamlined the research process, there is much vital information which cannot be found online. She offers pointers to the types of resources that are available: census records, digital (and digitised) newspapers, directories, immigration and military records, and historic photographs. Kemp (2001) and Kovacs (2003) similarly highlight resources. Kemp, emphasising the rapid growth of the genealogy field, observes "we have gone from a time when genealogists had to go to a library or archives to do their research, to a time when images and indexes of primary documents are fully text-searchable online". This sort of statement is prevalent in the mainstream media, suggesting that resources online are much more complete than they are in reality; any appearance of such a statement in the professional press is especially dangerous. He mainly discusses nationally based resources, such as the Library of Congress *American Memory Project* and *Project Gutenberg*, and offerings from more established e-resource providers such as Gale and ProQuest (*SSDI* and *PERSI*). Kovacs (2003) takes a more cautious and realistic approach, noting that although sometimes challenging, "success in helping patrons with genealogical research is the result of careful reference interviews combined with an understanding of what the web can—and cannot—provide". It cannot directly connect with researchers not on the web, find information not yet published, verify any information, or provide original documents. She stresses the importance of verifying any site or reference source before its recommendation, and of guiding patrons to collecting relevant names and dates from their family in the first instance. She also recommends beginner tutorials for both researcher and librarian understanding, as well as established and reliable online reference sources.

Other authors, such as Henritze (1998) who explores cemetery records and MIs, address particular types of records; Fink (2000) directs readers to routes of discovery for primary sources on the Internet; and Bever (2003) discusses MIs. Bever does suggest that libraries list

(or link to a list) of local graveyards, and details of published/online MIs for the area. Others such as Mattison (2002) are more directly useful, addressing census records websites in an international context. However, the rapid pace of development of resources means these are often of limited use for contemporary research. Kemp (1999) notes many online discussion and mailing lists, link sites, genealogical libraries and other online reference resources helpful for assisting genealogical reference. Some literature highlights strengths of a particular collection, such as the Wheaton Public Library, Illinois (Meisels, DeAre and Freymark 2000), or the Allen County Public Library, Indiana (Ashton 1983).

A large proportion of the UK local studies literature describes digital projects that have taken place, or aspects of the execution thereof. Mieczkowska and Pryor (2002) highlight efforts to digitise the microfilm of local Norfolk newspapers, following the loss of a press cuttings collection in a fire. The digital collection, created from the scanning of some 1.3 million frames, can only be accessed from the main library site owing to licensing restrictions, although the index is more widely available digitally, and images can be ordered from the collection. At the time of writing, 'browsability' of the images was not very user-friendly or satisfactory; however this was under review by the library. Lauder (2003) discusses Newsplan 2000, a large-scale newspaper preservation project awarded heritage lottery funding, to microfilm 1700 UK titles, many of which have subsequently been digitised from the microfilm. Royan (2000) describes some of the issues associated with the *SCRAN* (Scottish Cultural Resources Access Network) project. Now established as a major nationwide resource, *SCRAN*'s content was assembled with a large lottery grant, and had a complex three year battle over intellectual property rights and licensing, regarding both content creation and licences for use. The impact evaluation of *SCRAN* by Chowdhury, McMenemy and Poulter (2006) found high user awareness of the resource, although this did not translate into utilization. Contents were well received, but users expressed some dissatisfaction with retrieval and indexing of material. Most maintained they considered access to the service should remain free-of-charge. Usage figures suggested use was much higher in some library authorities than others, possibly owing to greater openness to online services. Public library staff welcomed the service, and felt initial training had been effective; although over a third felt losing access to the service would have a minimal effect. Some suggested it would grow in usefulness with more material, but needed much more

advertising to increase user awareness. The name was not immediately revealing of the database's contents, and others felt the initial focus of the resource had been lost.

Astle and Muir (2002) suggest that knowledge of a collection is vital prior to digitisation, and that the cost of a digitisation project could double or treble if cataloguing/catalogue conversion is also required. Fischer (2002) details the digitising, documenting, and online presentation of a heritage photograph collection in the Queensland, Australia. Photos were linked to short narratives on various local history topics, and published online though the library management system. She stressed "traditional library skills: identifying user needs; collection development; organising; managing; and facilitating access to information" were vital to the project's success. Hedegaard (2008) discusses the ongoing trend for co-operation between libraries, archives and museums, and the ideal of accessing all materials simultaneously in a union catalogue; however common standards of description and cataloguing are needed to make it a reality. He also observed "people seeking information do not care where they find it, as long as they do find it". Faletar Tanackovic (2008) similarly discusses cooperation and asserts that although they do it in different ways, libraries, archives and museums all preserve the memories of people and society. Heritage professionals, although they may not be used to working together, can cooperate with particularly effective results with digitised heritage portals and materials. Thibeaud (2002) describes the establishment of *A2A*, "a virtual national catalogue for the country", which links through to relevant archival repositories if an item of interest is located. This has subsequently been absorbed into the National Archives website. Jones (2008) reflects on 10 years of digitisation projects of the National Library of Wales, and notes that the institution is moving from "iconic cherry picking...to large-scale, if not mass digitisation", creating outputs which can be used and reused by others "inside or outside the institution". He also impresses that metadata creation must keep up with digitisation, and that material is now virtually invisible without an "electronic presence", be that a catalogue/finding aid, or the surrogate itself. Libraries also need to continue work on "core fitness" in addition to digitisation activities.

Libraries and local studies have a traditional role in information literacy instruction. Studies of information literacy are numerous (as are the many definitions), mostly focusing on either

schoolchildren or university-level students, and bearing limited relevance to the real world. Debate exists as to whether information literacy is a tacit skill, or whether it should be embedded into curricula. Smith and Oliver (2005) suggest "information literacy can be conceptualised as a key learning process related to discipline and academic maturity, rather than as a generic skill". Calvert (2001) suggests that information literacy skills are "the best possible solution" currently to identify when information and research present online is false, erroneous, plagiarised or fabricated; and stop its further replication. Some consider that it differs in "real life" situations. Lloyd discusses how information literacy can appear in "many faces and shapes" in workplaces and communities of practice (2005a), where (in the example of fire-fighting) actors must understand and interpret information from "social, physical and textual sources to function effectively". She suggests that it is more about engagement with information rather than a "generic set of skills", and that instruction would benefit from being a mentoring activity rather than a "one-off teaching activity". Lloyd (2005b) further suggests that information literacy is a "transformative process" which consists of both tangible and intangible components. Information workers must understand the various different sources of information available to learners and users, and how to engage with them. Williams and Coles (2003) investigated teachers' use of research findings in their professional practice, observing that although they demonstrated awareness of information literacy concepts, they did not always apply these themselves. In selection of material, they concentrated most on immediate applicability to their classroom reality, rather than "objectivity, lack of bias, appropriate methodology and the presence of sufficient evidence to support conclusions"; they were not always confident in the evaluation and use of findings. Reasons for this were lack of time and ready access to good quality information in suitable truncated forms, preferring this information to come from school management and education authorities.

Eshet-Alkali and Amichai-Hamburger (2004) proposed a model of digital literacy consisting of five component skills: photo-visual (handling information in pictures), reproduction (editing), branching (working in hypermedia environments), information, and socio-emotional (maturity, awareness and ability to participate in online communication) literacies. Savolainen (2002) defined "network competence" as one component of information literacy, including "mastery of four major areas: knowledge of information resources available on the

Internet, skilful use of the ICT tools for access to network sources, judgement of the relevance of information and use of computer mediated communication tools". Bawden and Robinson (2002) note that the many definitions of information literacy overlap to varying degrees with concepts of computer, library, media, network and digital literacies. The authors suggest that "training should be equally broad, varied, and context sensitive dependent on the training situation". Yakel and Torres (2003) examine the characteristics of what they term *AI, Archival Intelligence and User Expertise,* interviewing archives users to determine "researcher expertise". They assert there are "three distinct forms of knowledge required to work effectively with primary sources: domain (subject) knowledge, artifactual literacy (the ability to interpret records), and the authors' own concept of archival intelligence", itself comprising knowledge of archival theory and practices; strategies for tackling unstructured research problems; and "intellective skills". They suggest instruction should focus less on "how to do research here", and provide a more conceptual understanding of archives and search strategies that may provide users with more transferrable knowledge and information skills.

Cummings Cook (1998) highlights fears about "online-only" researchers that are also present in the genealogical community. In the pre-Internet era, experienced genealogists helped and assisted beginners. She calls on experienced researchers to help educate newer ones, with awareness of research techniques, primary records and citing sources. *Ancestry.co.uk* (2005) warns researchers not to "overlook the library website in the location of your ancestor", highlighting not only available information, but the referrals librarians can make to further sources. Weaver (2000) considers that general knowledge and librarian expertise are needed as well as searching, to make the most from the Internet. Knowing the likely source of information can make an easier and more successful search, and library gateways contain a lot of that expertise. She suggests trying a known source first, then the subject page or gateway, only searching as a last resort. Howells (2002) suggests that patrons should be directed to Internet research with a specific research goal in mind, such as a specific life event or something equally focused.

2.7   *Library Websites*

"An online presence is required to link from what now exists in cyberspace to 'traditional' services. There is a need to disseminate and celebrate local studies online, in order to show the users of electronic resources how much value could be added to their research by local studies collections...users will not engage with local studies libraries unless we engage with them" (Reid and Macafee 2007). More and more patrons now expect websites from institutions. Reid (2003) describes two varieties of local studies websites; informative, and interactive. Reid and Macafee note that although information guides and FAQs can be helpful for users, a fully interactive service is ideal for "embracing the public's enthusiasm for family history". Sites should be a "resource, not a brochure", increasing the likelihood of repeat visits; they should have unique information, and be accurate and comprehensive, user friendly; a good launch-pad for browsing other sites. Targeting different user groups with resources can attract return visitors. They further note that local studies, under-resourced as it is, has furthermore not been at the front of the IT funding queue, and it was better to prioritise quality rather than quantity in e-resource creation.

As Davidsson (2004) earlier suggested, remote users make no tax contribution to collections, "but their needs demand special consideration because they cannot make use of the collection in its physical location at all" (Reid and Macafee 2007). Although local users should be prioritised, services should make as much provision for remote users as possible. The increased scope for access from overseas (1.1, 1.3) makes it more likely that those discovering an "ancestral connection to a place will interrogate a local studies collection electronically". Online collections can therefore be an advertisement for the local area, and could benefit local taxpayers by linking to and from local business and tourism sites. They highlight that local and remote electronic access are not mutually exclusive, and in practice, local users are also clamouring for electronic access to resources.

Morville and Wickhorst (1996) advocate the creation of subject guides to the Internet by librarians, to provide authoritative starting points for patrons. Librarians can add considerable value by their selection, organisation, presentation and description of the selected resources. Criddle (1999) suggests sites should have a clear vision, and libraries should try and develop "killer apps", innovative resources and services attracting interest

and further investment. Joined-up thinking was encouraged between departments, as was developing a sense of ownership and motivation amongst library staff, and obtaining recognition of the staff time and resources required for website creation and development. Lewis (2002) demonstrated that websites can improve access to non-digital materials, through extended collection descriptions, online finding aids, and collection FAQs. A standard online form for requests ensures that enough information is provided by an enquirer in the first instance.

Hildebrand (2003) argues that some rethinking is required to turn current public library online offerings into "true online branch [libraries]", and that website development must be a "collaborative effort between IT professionals, graphic designers and information professionals in consultation with business units, stakeholders and users". Sites should include (at a minimum): an online catalogue with ordering and delivery functions; online registration; an interactive reference service; online payment facilities; "value added resources" (such as annotated subject gateways and local history resources); and current library service information. Ball (2003) investigated current public library developments in the purchase of electronic resources by consortia, found to be surprisingly low. Barriers were financial, licensing, technology and authentication problems; also staff familiarity and remote delivery. Libraries wanted to pursue such options, keen on wider access to reference materials (including genealogy and local studies/heritage), but consortium purchasing did not seem to be having much effect on pricing. With no national strategy or coordination, creating a "national electronic reference collection" would be beneficial. Hill (2004) describes the increasing need to make online users a priority, attracting those who may never go to a repository. Finding aids must be "as detailed and as of as high a quality as we can afford", which must be discoverable by search engine as well as accessible by other archival systems. He considers that recording online users is the only way to understand the true use of services.

White (2000a) highlights local studies librarians as "the handlers and keepers of memory, the community memory", which he believes to be diminishing. Although materials are saved and collected, they have to be accessed to be remembered. "Rather than become a pseudo-portal, which refers elsewhere, librarians should engage their local communities by

coordinating the capture of the now in a variety of creative ways-and disseminate that information using the web." This challenges poor information on the Internet by creating high-quality new material, accessible at any time, instead of requiring physical visits during library opening hours. He further describes (2000b) the considerations needed for designing usable and accessible pages, selecting appropriate keywords, and judiciously selecting links. He reminds readers that such sites need regular reappraisal and updating. Abram (2005) argues that library websites are a "shop window" where added-value content will attract users. Sommers (2005) felt a common entry point for commercial, web and library catalogues with combined search results would be beneficial, allowing easier and more visible access to local and special collections.

Reid (2005a) considers *Ten Do's and Don'ts of Local Studies on the Internet*, advising in the first instance the consideration of users, taking account of "the diversity of sources and investigations, and their desire to access...the best or unique aspects of your collection". Sites must present more than basic details; incorporating as much service delivery as possible in addition to marketing. A local heritage gateway is a good way to do this, re-using other resources where desirable and possible. Services must think carefully and strategically about their website, considering both design and preservation, and their goals for what they wish it to achieve. Sowers (2003) describes the addition of biographical and other local and family history "analytics" to a library catalogue, essentially adding additional access points at a finer granular level for individual articles or chapters. Much information buried in larger works can now be accessed through individual catalogue records. Macgregor (2003) asserts the benefits of collection-level descriptions for "both user resource discovery and institutional collection management" of increasingly hybrid libraries. They can convey the context of the items collocated together sometimes more effectively than item-level description, and can "enable the discovery of collections of interest" prior to item-level cataloguing.

Bültmann (2005) recommends that metadata creation, vital to discovery and retrieval, should be costed into funding bids. Establishing a "UK Register of Digital Surrogates" would further raise awareness and "improve discovery of and access to digitised materials". Puacz (2000) notes customers now expect much more from websites, and libraries need to bear this

in mind to attract and retain e-patrons. Content is key to hooking users into using a site, therefore in addition to essential service details, "include some special information that may not be available to your patrons anywhere else on the web", such as remote database access, virtual reference, or "unique local history resources". Most importantly, sites need to be a continuation of the library service through electronic means, with friendly, efficient and timely responses to email contact. They must also be attractive, usable, accessible, well-maintained, and quick to load. The site should be publicised in publications of relevant special interest groups, emphasising "any special local history sources available from the library's website, like digitized historical documents or indexes to local events, newspapers, or documents". Visitor number statistics also allow libraries to lobby for additional funding for website development. Welch (2005) argues that library web page statistics are needed to give a true picture of library interactions with users. In addition to home page hits, services can gather the total number of page views, number of individual computers accessing the site, and determine which pages are most frequently accessed. She suggests these can demonstrate and justify the staff time invested in online resources and services, perhaps allowing more librarian input into design and management decisions.

Cox *et al.* (2007) concur with Anderson (2004), that finding aids available online should be more than digital versions of paper finding aids. They must be designed with the user in mind, as online there is not the opportunity for practitioners to further interpret them. "If the online finding aids are not helpful, the user may not find anything he or she needs and subsequently be turned off from archives in general". Anderson further notes that ideally, finding aids would operate like *Amazon*, with personalised functionality, and the capability for users to rate, comment on and describe sources. Thomas (2002) suggests that a local library portal should sit between general or national offerings, and personalised sites such as *Amazon* or *eBay*, with more localised information sources and events. Branding and advertising would demonstrate the credibility and authority of the resource.

Falk (2000) suggests homepages should give obvious routes to resources and the primary functions of any system. All available resources should be discussed, not just those online, giving enough description for a new user to grasp their contents. They should be welcoming with useful information, using straight-forward language and terminology, and frequently

updated. He also advocates highlighting special collections on library websites, raising awareness of their existence, with enough information to allow users to assess relevance. Houghton (2005) discusses the problem of operating inside the design frame of a larger parent organisation. Libraries are subject to the technical constraints and policies of the parent authority; additionally any deficiencies in the parent site (navigation, non-compliance with accessibility legislation, sloppy metadata) will automatically affect the library too. Space is often limited owing to organisational branding and information, which also can make it hard to distinguish library content from other links. Aside from moving to a dedicated site, services should simplify the library navigation as much as possible, and place distinguishing library graphics on all pages to create a stronger identity. She advocates building relationships and influence with the IT department responsible for the site, aiming to work with, not against, them.

Wallis (2005) highlights the increasing importance and awareness of requirements for accessibility of websites to those with 'disabilities' or impairments, according to government and W3C guidelines. On behalf of the MLA, Petrie, King and Hamilton (2005) conducted an audit, using automated software, of 300 English library, archive and museum websites, checking compliance with the incoming Disability Discrimination Act. Accessibility levels were found to be not very high, with only 42% of home pages meeting basic web accessibility guidelines (WCAG Level A), 3% with Level AA, and only 1 with Level AAA. The average site "presents disabled users with nearly 216 potential accessibility stumbling blocks". Additional testing by a user panel found that only 75.6% of basic tasks could be successfully completed. Websites were reasonably easy to use, but 56% felt lost at least once, through misleading links (leading to irrelevant materials); missing "skip navigation links"; lack of text equivalents for non-text elements (e.g. images); poor colour schemes; and a lack of accessibility options (allowing users to change the presentation of the site, e.g. colour and text size). Nearly a quarter of problems encountered by the panel were not highlighted during automated testing, emphasising the importance of "real users" in website development. Heritage services need to engage with the WAI Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, making web accessibility an integral part of their web development process.

Tibbo and Meho (2001) tested the visibility of web-mounted finding aids via six popular search engines. Locating these by phrase searching was more successful than "the simplistic word searching that many naive users employ", giving higher precision. Within the first 30 results: "*FastSearch* located the finding aid 65% of the time; *Google* 59%"; using just the titles, 87% and 76%. No engine retrieved all the finding aids in the sample; using *Google* in combination with another search engine was most successful. Those retrieved were highly likely to be in the top 20, if not 10, results. Weideman and Schwenke (2006) found many search engines avoid JavaScript links (often used to create navigation menus). They conclude that "human-friendly, pop-up menus on web pages" are a barrier to "search-engine-friendly websites", and the use of normal HTML/text links and a sitemap should be included as best practice to allow engines to navigate.

Sherman and Price (2003) defined *The Invisible Web* as web content that cannot be accessed by a traditional search engine; this can include top quality resources. Crawlers deliberately exclude certain file types, and also often dynamically driven sites (where pages are generated by script commands); databases often cannot be penetrated at all. Individual pages (or entire servers) can request crawlers not to index them, or can be password protected. Botluck (2000) estimated that the invisible web was 500 times the size of the visible web at that time. She noted that a gateway is a good way to discover entry points to invisible databases. Joint (2005) commented on recent enhancements to *Google*, including deeper searching into "the invisible web". Whilst deeper searching seems better, users often seek full-text from *Google*. This may return an "unexpected false drop" (seemingly unrelated result), the effect of a "search engine poking into a database such as *Pubmed*", and misinterpreting its metadata. The same keywords entered into the database itself would yield different results.

Reid and Macafee (2007) note that the most significant development in library websites since Reid (2003) is Web 2.0 applications. Anderson (2007) highlights six main precepts of Web 2.0: individual production and user-generated content; harnessing the power of the crowd, data aggregated on an epic scale, the architecture (or the facilities) of participation; network effects, and openness. Bradley (2007) similarly identifies four criteria present in Web 2.0 tools: applications are web-based, constantly technically revised, collaborative, and are

examples of the technical advances which make them possible. He also defines and explains many applications[86], giving examples of their use, both generally and in a library context. He offers advice for their implementation within a larger organisation, including dealing with management; corporate style is a likely obstacle to their implementation. There is an expanding variety of applications that are constantly evolving at great speed.

Chad and Miller (2005) describe Web 2.0 applications as "participative", and their utilization as vital if libraries are to assert their relevance and match "modern user's expectations". They facilitate the pushing-out of content and services to users rather than requiring them to visit a library website. Berube (2005) examines a number of new technologies and how they might be incorporated into the public library web environment "which allow libraries a variety of means for reaching the public, to provide expertise and access to creative, cultural and entertainment resources". She discusses the changes Web 2.0 has brought to users' interactions in the web environment, also facilitating librarian communication with users, and highlighting a number of applications which can be successfully employed in service delivery. Services should create a virtual community around the library website or social networking profile, and content for mobile devices, ensuring the maintenance of accessibility. The public want new technologies, but they also want human involvement and interactivity. She stresses that the potential of any new innovations should be evaluated in a business case in a local context, and that it is the manner in which they are adopted that will determine their effectiveness and success.

Browne and Rooney-Browne (2008) describe implementation of Web 2.0 concepts in East Renfrewshire, arguing that libraries have an equally-important role in virtual communities. Aiming to promote participation, collaboration and "engagement with the library services", and promote Web 2.0 skills amongst staff and the community, they considered that *Facebook* most suitable for library use, with a clear and simple design, popularity, options for organisations, and controllable privacy settings. Each library had its own profile, contact and collection information, linked strongly to the website, and advertised within libraries and email newsletters. Services can use the 'Wall', discussion board and messaging to engage

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[86] RSS feeds; Weblogs; Podcasts; Start pages; Social Bookmarking; Website creation and use; Instant Messaging; and Photo-sharing.

with users, and can monitor usage and statistics, but must ensure "ongoing staff training". Rutherford (2008) found blogs and RSS feeds were the most common Web 2.0 applications in use in New Zealand public libraries. Libraries were generally positive regarding their use, noting that technologies must fit with both organisational goals for interaction and service delivery, and the culture of the library. Although applications were themselves inexpensive to instigate, costs may be involved in staff training (identified as a vital component in social software success), as well as upkeep and development of the services. It was important for staff to be accepting of technologies, and for services to be marketed to encourage user awareness and engagement. Other challenges involved were working with local government IT departments, a lack of ability to add participative elements into OPACs, and dealing with "comment spam", particularly on blogs.

Sutherland (2010) found that social networking challenged libraries to push content out to the customer, and expand the "library" brand to more than just books, in user imaginations. Even with a dedicated web team, there is a need to make all staff aware of the processes involved, and give responsibility to all for content development. Libraries operating within a parent organisation have trouble responding to "digital" and social technologies in a timely manner because of organisational restrictions; they must also work hard to get the "voice and audience right". Photo-sharing site *Flickr* allows both increased access to, and embedding of material "into a social space". Sutherland recognised that Web 2.0 is becoming mainstream, enabling users to "have those conversations with materials in our collections and be able to recognise their library in a world of the library without walls". McLean and Merceica (2010) discovered a high "hidden usage" of their blogs not recorded within visit statistics. Users received posts either by email (predominantly) or RSS feed; a significant number of these had never visited the actual blog pages, yet still received the information through their email accounts. Others accessed the posts via the blog feed display on the library website.

Yakel and Kim (2003) noted that structure and navigation in particular can "make or break" a site, losing the effect of excellent content. Content creation and development seemed to have been the priority; there was a lack of interactive options. They suggest targeting sections of the sites towards specific audiences, such as school children/teachers and

genealogists, can encourage use. There was a lack of effective use of 'description' and 'keywords' HTML metatags, which would have assisted in search engine retrieval, which here was not high. The number of other sites linking to a resource can improve its Google ranking. Watts (2006) was "disheartened" that only 29 of 50 US public library local history collections of these were returned as results for a search for "local history" and the city name. She surmises that users may not automatically think of the library for "in depth look at the history of the community", and that services should strive to ensure all possible users are aware of their collections. There was little consistency in information provision; collection descriptions were more commonly present than basic contact details. Only limited inclusion of "tutorials and web-based instruction" was observed, and Watts felt that user education "should be transposed onto the web to reach users who are not able to visit the collection in person"; finding aids were a little more prevalent (26% of cases). She noted the "effectiveness and depth of a website" was most likely reliant on those responsible for the collection.

Higgs (2006) examined *Access to special and local studies collections in UK public libraries*, discovering "a high proportion of collections...partially or completely uncatalogued". The importance of balancing user access, preservation and financial concerns came through strongly, specifically difficulties of gaining funding for surrogacy creation. "Users expecting to see digitised collections from their local libraries providing access like that given by The National Archives may often be disappointed, as the funding to create such access routes is not always easy to come by". Digital surrogates were commonly mounted online, rather than in-house only, preferring to allow access to these rather than ensuring image security; with libraries tending to restrict printing rather than password-protect materials. Respondents suggested it was easier to obtain funding for cherry-picking digitisation of "fragile, rare or unique" materials, vital for user access if cataloguing is incomplete. He felt the creation of a database of the digitised collections of all UK public libraries would be advantageous, increasing chances of resource discovery.

Tucker (2004), considering that the physical door of the archive was becoming less important than the virtual, examined how family history researchers are greeted on 60 repository websites. Thirty-three recognised genealogy on their home page, with 48 providing a dedicated page for genealogical researchers. Although this indicated that archives were keen

to convey information regarding "genealogical resources, services, and holdings", pages were not always easily found, with only 22 (from 48) reached in one click from the homepage. Over half provided some kind of user education for beginning researchers; 31 of these "coordinated learning about family history with other associated topics". Revisiting the investigation the following year, Tucker (2006) noted archives should acknowledge family historians on their home page, and attempt to "contextualize their searches for ancestors within an array of topics". The information given is critical to public understanding of archives (archival intelligence). Considerable revisions had been made, and sites were more welcoming; 92% showed a separate page for family history; 71% acknowledged family history on the homepage. There was a greater availability of online services, and consideration to family history to given in the way sources were presented, clarifying ambiguities of the sources of records; seventeen sites listed genealogy amongst their top five shortcuts. Family historians had far higher expectations since commercial and national offerings went online.

Mawe (2007) evaluated a sample of 48 UK local studies collection websites to see if they met "the needs of their local studies users"[87], examining information provided for visiting users; remote access; usability; and accessibility. Generally, usability criteria were met, but recommended better link placement and fewer "dense blocks" of text. "More comprehensive coverage" of collection service information would allow local and remote users to "fully appreciate the services on offer". Remote users would be better served by linking to library catalogues and relevant databases directly from local studies pages, providing accessible guidance material online, and by making more digital collections available. She also noted a general lack of interactive materials and social software. Barry and Tedd (2008) investigated Irish local studies collections online, examining websites and interviewing practitioners. Twenty-eight out of 32 Irish authorities had a local studies page, although with considerable disparity in content and quality, indicating "website provision is not prioritised equally". Sites presented good first impressions, with excellent quality and presented content, but less of a clear purpose. Most were easy to read, and consistently branded. There was poor currency and maintenance; 45% with dead links; no update date, or no frequently-updated content. Address details were commonly provided, but needed a contact on each page and

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[87] This took place 6 months prior to evaluations in the present study (3.8, Chapter 7).

author identification. Only half used images, and very few used other multi-media. There were very few help sections or FAQs, less than half with ALT-tags or text-only options. All gave details of the local studies collections and most gave a bibliography of useful sources, but few gave any research instructions for genealogists, and only just over half provided links to genealogy websites. Local studies practitioners asserted the need for remote access for visitors from overseas, increasing visibility and creating a positive impression. There was a noticeable demand for digitisation (for preservation, access and promotion), but services could not deliver a whole collection online.

2.8   *Marketing*

Barber (2002b) tells us that "Marketing is about being customer-centred (what customers actually want)"; and the 'what' of promotion (local studies materials) is as important as to 'whom' and 'why' it is being promoted. Collections need to know who their users and potential users are. She recommends developing a strategy, identifying user demographics and their reasons for using the collection, and setting objectives and developing a plan of action, including internal and external publicity. Internal promotion is important to raise the profile of local studies and demonstrate its benefits, not always at the forefront of council's minds. Education and outreach work, and publications from the collection are also beneficial. The website is highly important, and services should take the time and care to convert materials appropriately for the medium, and include "links to and from relevant sites". Digitised materials can also increase interest. Services should set targets for strategy, and constantly review the success of these. Allery (2000) recommends "look outside the bigger picture, look for opportunities" to promote the worth of local history collections and services. Projects for volunteers (indexing, oral history recordings), educational sessions for schools and others in the community, displays, publications, and local history tours can all expose collections to non-users. Services should foster connections with other collections and organisations; promoting any events, such as fairs or classes through the local media, Internet and within the local authority itself. Hirtle (2003) stresses that archives must promote "the skills, talents, knowledge and abilities" of staff, and the "added value services", like easy searching and online ordering, that users value.

Melrose (2005) discusses issues involved in working with local authority press offices, and the local press. They will often have specified corporate formats for press releases, and may wish to edit, or even write press releases themselves, distorting the message, or make getting out information prohibitively slow. She advocates working within ground rules while "nurturing" relationships with both communications departments and the press, making proactive contact outside times of special events. Services need to develop an understanding of the kind of language and story that will be suitable for publication, tailoring these for different publications, and having suitable stock photographs on hand. Publicity teams should be briefed about events, in case they are contacted for a story. "Good promotion does not end at the conclusion of a local history month or when a talk or presentation is over and everyone has gone home. It needs to be worked at and it needs to be continuous". For example, a press release (Leicestershire County Council 2009) was picked up largely word-for-word by inloughborough.com (2009), announcing the launch of two blogs, links to the library and museum *Facebook* and *Twitter* sites, as well as giving details about existing services.

Reid and Macafee (2007) suggest it is vital that the expert contributions of local studies librarians are easily visible and reachable from wherever users start navigating; the site should be pushed out to web-search tools, and other sites allowed and persuaded to include links. Bradley (2002) offers advice on *Getting and Staying Noticed on the Web*, including linking to other sites, and updating and keeping information current. He explains the workings of search engines, and how to be found by free text (*Google*) and index-based (*Yahoo*) engines, with advice on using appropriate keywords, titles and metatags to enhance rankings, and advises on using interactive website elements where appropriate. Sites must match the expectations of visitors. He also addresses the benefits of identifying, and learning from "competitor" sites in similar sectors.

Smith (2002) argues services should trade more on the trust of the library brand, recommending that websites need to be "easily findable by our patrons, using common search engines and Internet directories". He suggests that users have had their expectations raised by commercial offerings such as *Amazon*, and expect a customised experience (with personal recommendations etc.); easy to use and always available. Leigh and Best (2002) are

concerned with the power of branding, and conveying the added value of library services. They highlight the practice of co-branding, where databases or services provided by libraries are labelled with both local and provider logos, emphasising the library's role in providing an electronic service, where previously some users may have been unaware of their involvement. This can be done for electronic services and portals. Turner, Wilkie and Rosen (2004) found that repeat users to the National Electronic Library for Health returned for reasons of quality, speed and ease of use, and the "one-stop shop" factor. Non-users were unaware of the resource, or unable to find it linked from other sites. An "awareness week" was subsequently held to promote the resource, which librarians taking part reported was a "useful hook from which to hang activities". Price (2006) stresses that libraries must "keep talking and explaining. People don't have any chance of using what they don't know about". They must communicate to users *and* non-users about remote electronic access to library resources, noting that "the library world (the industry) has done a mediocre-to-poor job of letting the public know that the world of the library exists" outside library buildings.

Reid (2005b) discusses marketing of e-resources, and the need to ensure that these are being used and engaged with by their intended audience. Proactive marketing is important, although thought must be given to "how users will access and make sense of it". He advocates "an e-resource is only valuable if users know that it exists and can use it effectively and can see benefit in doing so." Sambrook and Donnelly (2006) discuss strategies employed to promote the archives and special collections. They advocate working closely with relevant press and promotion departments. Different highlights from the collection can be physically exhibited, and later modified into digital exhibitions. Activities can piggy-back on the publicity of national events, such as the Archives Awareness Campaign. The award-winning *Charles Booth Online Archive*, which provides electronic access to Booth's incredibly descriptive accounts of poverty in Victorian London, includes a searchable catalogue (by name, location or free-text), digitised notebooks and maps. Although known to academics, there was little public knowledge of the physical collection, despite clear relevance to local and family historians, who were specifically targeted alongside teachers and schoolchildren. The resource was submitted to appropriate portals and link sites, discussed at conferences and demonstration events, articles submitted to magazines and specific family history publications, alongside giveaway branded materials. Promotion has remained ongoing, and this has resulted in significant use of the site, and increased interest in the original materials.

Holland and Baker (2001) describe relationship marketing as customer focused; a "two-way interactive communication where the customer actively participates in his/her value creation". Sites must retain existing users, not just recruit new ones; but first must have content of sufficient depth and quality. Site stickiness, "the ability to encourage customers to stay longer, navigate more deeply into a site, and return more often", is considered beneficial for brand loyalty. Visiting multiple pages is good for those surfing "for fun" (experiential goals), but not for those who are lost in a poor and confusing navigation system looking for one vital element (task-orientated goals). Personalisation and elements such as online communities may also increase stickiness; however, "customers must both *desire* and *value* personalisation for it to have effects on brand loyalty". Henderson (2005) suggests digital library services can be marketed to existing users via email, further promoted by satisfied customers' (digital) word-of-mouth. Hallam Smith (2003) observes that online archive users are "generally less satisfied than on-site users (and can become overtly...critical when online services hit problems)". She describes a number of the NA's service and resource developments, highlighting customer-focused initiatives. Services are targeted to specific user groups, "reaching out" to non-users. The online 1901 census, after initial teething problems, was extremely popular and brought in a significant number of new users. Services must try and give customers what they want, while trying not to let their expectations get too high.

Andrews (2006) examined the *Marketing of and Access to Special Collections in Public Libraries*, comparing differing approaches in five local authorities in the East Midlands, and observed great variations in marketing activity and of participation in national policies and initiatives. They favoured catalogue retro-conversion over digitisation projects, "largely due to the increased visibility and access to the collections that cataloguing would provide". Although most collections approached marketing in a proactive manner, lack of support or communication from others in the authority often hampered these efforts. Local studies are "promoted well within the confines of the library service at a physical level", but collections themselves could be utilised much more for promotional purposes, both physically and online, and need to increase their visibility.

2.9   Summary

This review, together with the previous chapter, has explored various relevant issues which we take forward into the rest of the thesis. With the well-documented increase in interest in genealogy and family history (1.1, 1.3) and vast growth of online resources, local studies collections are not as prominent within this as they have been in the past (Hallam Smith 2000; Tucker 2004, 2006 and others) even though "local studies departments [can] provide the background and context that many family historians crave"; (Reid 2003). It is vitally important to examine ways for local studies collections to maintain and enhance services to family historians online, and re-establish their place and importance within e-research. Enquiries (particularly by email) continue to increase year on year (Smith 2002); further, it is the duty of information professionals dealing with family historians "to provide themselves with the knowledge and ability to assist" (Davidsson 2004). The need for further and wider promotion of services to users and non-users has also become more important (Barth 1997; Melrose 2002), as has the need for awareness-raising in the public domain. As previously discussed, Harvey (1992)'s observation of genealogical librarianship encompassing "the subject, the people, and the librarian's response" inspired the three strands of users, resources and local studies. The importance of understanding the potential user group for library services is well established, therefore the study aims to identify users UK e-family history resources who may benefit from e-local studies services. It also wishes to examine their online research behaviour, and their display of information literacy skills.

As discussed above, despite recent developments in online local studies information, there does not seem to be great awareness of this amongst family historians. Sonnenwald's (1999) notion of Information Horizons conceptualises the sources known and visible to a researcher in their 'field of vision' available for selection in a response to a particular information need. Using this notion, Figure 2.1 illustrates the understanding and hypothesis that to family historians online, e-local studies, despite the value they can add to family history research, are not present in their information horizon, and therefore not visibly available as a resource.
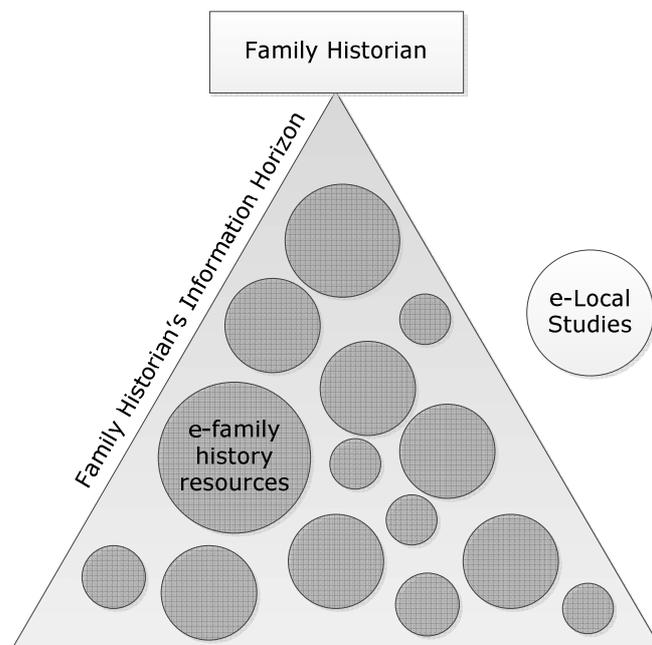
Figure 2.1: Projected Family Historian Information Horizon (Sonnenwald 1999)

To understand why this is the case, the research examines the e-family history resources that are in this field of vision, in order to see what may help e-local studies enter users' information horizons (Figure 2.2). It seeks to identify which resources are commonly in use, and similarly, which resources are visible and why. Examination and knowledge of resources (and training in this area) is also of important to local studies practitioners, in maintaining the quality of resource recommendations and enquiry services (Paul 1995; Webster 2005; Barber 2007). Several authors (Carothers 1983; Ralston 1996; Stahr 2003; Cooper 2005 and others) have suggested that a lack of confidence in the resources and working of genealogical research have contributed to the tense relationship that has existed between librarians and family historians. In order to further practitioner understanding of e-resources, the research ask questions an information professional would of any resource: identifying their characteristics, the aspects which reflect quality in an e-resource on this subject, and how should they be evaluated. Alongside knowledge of users' online research behaviour and their display of information literacy skills, this will support service development and staff training.

Returning to e-Local Studies and library websites, Hildebrand (2003) observed that these are not (yet) a true extension of the physical service, and should strive to achieve this (Falk 2000). Berube (2005) and McMenemy (2007) raise further concerns about the usability and visibility of library web presences and their parent Local Authority websites, and the confusing nature

of their structure. Tibbo and Meho (2001) and Sherman and Price (2003) both highlight that not all good quality websites and collection finding aids are visible and discoverable via the web. From a starting point of establishing the current status of e-local studies collections and their e-family history provision, the research then investigates what local studies practitioners could and should be providing online. It also examines the online visibility of collections, and ways this could be improved. In bringing the results of these research questions together, it is hoped that e-local studies can be pulled into the Information Horizons of more family historians (Figure 2.2).
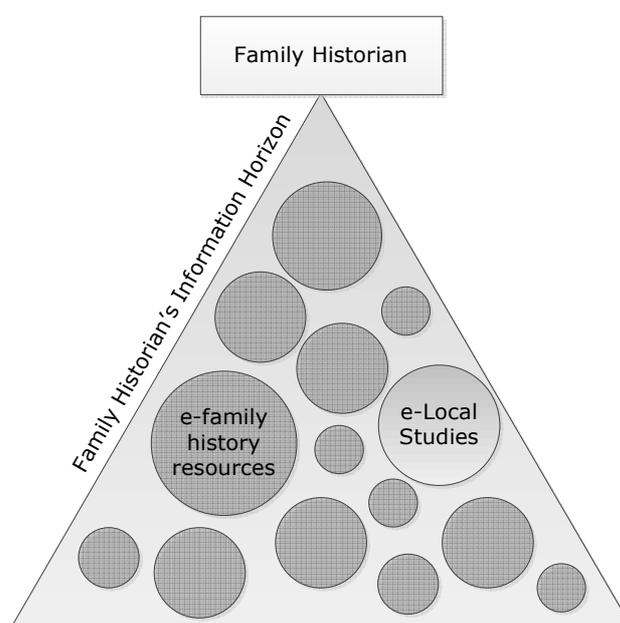
Figure 2.2 : Projected Family Historian Information Horizon (Sonnenwald 1999): Research goal

From within the literature on information behaviour, several models and theories (both in general, and more specific to genealogists and family historians) have had particular significance in this investigation. Both Dervin (1992)'s Sense-making and Kuhlthau's (1991) Information Seeking Process have both been influential in reflecting the user-centred context required for such investigations. Savolainen's (1995) Everyday Life Information Seeking is important in terms of studying a population outside academia or the workplace, and in terms of an information seeking process which is not time-limited, or limited to a single task. Bates' (1989) berrypicking model of a constantly evolving query was similarly significant, and Ellis' (1989a, 1989b) model has highlighted elements of strategies that could be employed by researchers. Focussing more specifically on studies involving genealogists and family historians, Duff and Johnson (2003)'s description of research as iterative has been

particularly influential, as has their observation of the reframing of individual searches into other forms. Yakel's (2004) notion of family history research as ongoing process, and likewise Francis' (2004) extension of Kuhlthau's work, highlighting elements of a circular pattern of behaviour, have both considerably contributed to understanding within the user strand of the study.

Chapter 3 will go on to examine the methodology of the research, and the execution of the data collection.

3.1   Introduction

This chapter follows on from placing the research in context, by addressing the research approach, data collection methods, and the setting of the study within its philosophical context. All methodological decisions were developed around the research questions and objectives of the research, and their appropriateness to answer these. After an exploration of the literature gathering and search process, each method of primary data collection is briefly examined, preceding discussion of their implementation and analysis of the resultant data. The research web site and the study's ethical considerations are also described. Critical reflections on the methodology are presented later in 9.1.

3.2   Research Design and Theoretical Approach

Several methodological frameworks or approaches are available to academic researchers; each reflecting different sets of philosophical assumptions and worldviews, and are often linked with their own sets of methods and analysis techniques. We wish to understand the phenomenon of e-family history research as experienced by its actors, and identifying patterns among participants' behaviour and themes in their discussions is key to this understanding. Bearing this in mind, a largely constructivist approach has been adopted, where the events, processes and knowledge of "part of the social world" are understood "as far as possible from the perspective and context of the actors within it" (Finch 1987). No single research approach was identified that encompassed all the elements the study wished to accomplish; therefore the present research was conceived and designed as a hybrid, or crossover study, and employed different approaches for different areas of investigation. It can primarily be categorised as an Ethnographic study, but also incorporates elements of Evaluation research.

Ethnography's roots lie in the field of anthropology, specifically to study human society, practices, and culture. Merriam (2002) suggests that "although culture has been variously defined, it usually refers to the beliefs, values and attitudes that shape the behaviour of a particular group of people". Cresswell (2003) also describes this as an "amorphous term" attributed when trying to identify "patterns in [a cultural group's] social world". Hammersley (1998) suggests that an ethnographic study should have the following features: the study of people's behaviour in everyday or natural settings; data is gathered from a number of sources (most commonly observation or conversation); an initial unstructured approach to data collection; a relatively small number of cases are studied; and that analysis is inductive, centring on the understanding of behaviour and culture, resulting in what is commonly termed 'thick description'. Merriam also notes that "ethnography is not defined by how data are collected, but rather by the lens through which the date are interpreted". Robson (2002) suggests this approach is appropriate if "you are seeking insight into a field that is new or different"; this approach was selected to build an understanding of the online information behaviour and practices of family history researchers. Evaluation research is a particular form of applied research, carried out for a particular purpose, to "assess how well a process, program or service is working" (Mellon 1990). Such research falls largely into two categories: formative, conducted prior to or during the establishing of something; and summative, after establishment or while it is running. Robson (2002), noting the wide range of topics and purposes to which this approach can be applied, emphasises the need for systematic data collection, and for findings to be directly used for the research to be effective. This approach was selected specifically to assess the current state of e-Local Studies, and determine the necessary knowledge required of e-family history resources.

The study centres on three strands or foci (1.5), corresponding to the aims of the research, and the interactions between them: e-Family History Resources (resources); Resource Users (users); and Public Library Local Studies Collections (local studies). These strands follow Harvey (1992)'s observation that issues regarding genealogical provision group together according to "the subject and its sources, the people, and the librarian's response". Most primary data collection focussed around resource users; an extremely important consideration within LIS research, vital for information service (or system) design and evaluation. Wilson (1994) noted most user research has "been about how people use systems, rather than about the users themselves and other aspects of their information-seeking

behaviour". Banwell and Coulson indicate these are multi-faceted and multidimensional investigations concerning "people, behaviour and contexts. They need both quantitative and qualitative approaches to be combined to produce both the holistic view and the robust data needed to triangulate and thereby validate data collected" (Banwell and Coulson 2004). The User strand is the main Ethnographic area of the study (alongside its intersections with other strands); Evaluation research encompasses the remaining sections of the Resources (formative) and Local Studies (summative) strands. The three foci, and desired user perspective, are illustrated in Figure 3.1.
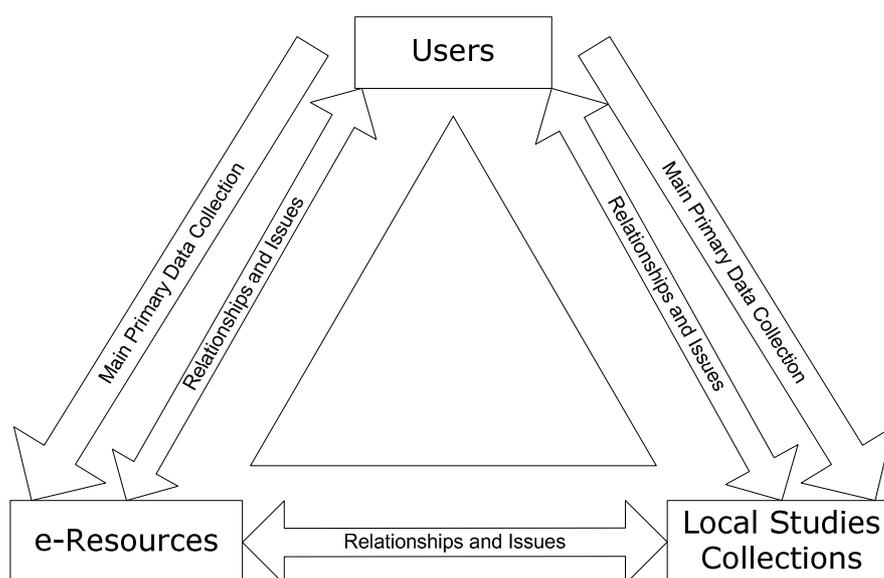
Figure 3.1: Central Foci of the Research

Combining qualitative and quantitative methods and strategies can "draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both" (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie 2004). Gorman and Clayton (2005) observe that this can give "both macro and micro-level perspectives in a single project". Such use of multiple methods can also contribute to data triangulation. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) describe triangulation (a term loosely coined from navigation), as creating a more accurate picture of a situation (internally confirming findings) using more than one data source. This increases the internal validity of the study. Further to this, a number of methods of data collection were matched to the objectives and research questions of the study. The online survey (3.7.1) was to both discover, and gain access to the population for later stages of the research. Diaries (3.7.2) were selected to allow the capture of research behaviour in as close to a natural setting as possible, additionally

accessing this over a longer time period. Shadowing (3.7.3) allowed direct observation of research behaviour; quasi-experiments regarding source preferences; and preliminary examinations of Local Studies websites. Focus Groups (3.7.4) allowed for direct questioning of family historians regarding their resource preferences and use, and their thoughts on e-Local Studies. They also facilitated deeper group assessments of e-Local Studies sites. Benchmarking (3.8) enabled like-for-like comparisons across all e-Local Studies websites, and establishing their current state at the time of data collection. Interviews (3.8) allowed direct questioning of Local Studies practitioners about their experiences with their websites, and with family history provision and researchers.

Figure 3.2 summarises the data gathering plan, showing which of the selected methods contribute to which areas of the study. 'Web Resources' refers to regular monitoring and examination of e-family history resources, performing much the same purpose as the Literature Review, in terms of establishing their context, and observing new developments. 'User Data' encompasses the collective data gathered from the diaries, shadowing and focus groups, which input into the intersections between strands. This diverse range of data collection avenues give the research the multidimensional aspect that Banwell and Coulson advocate.
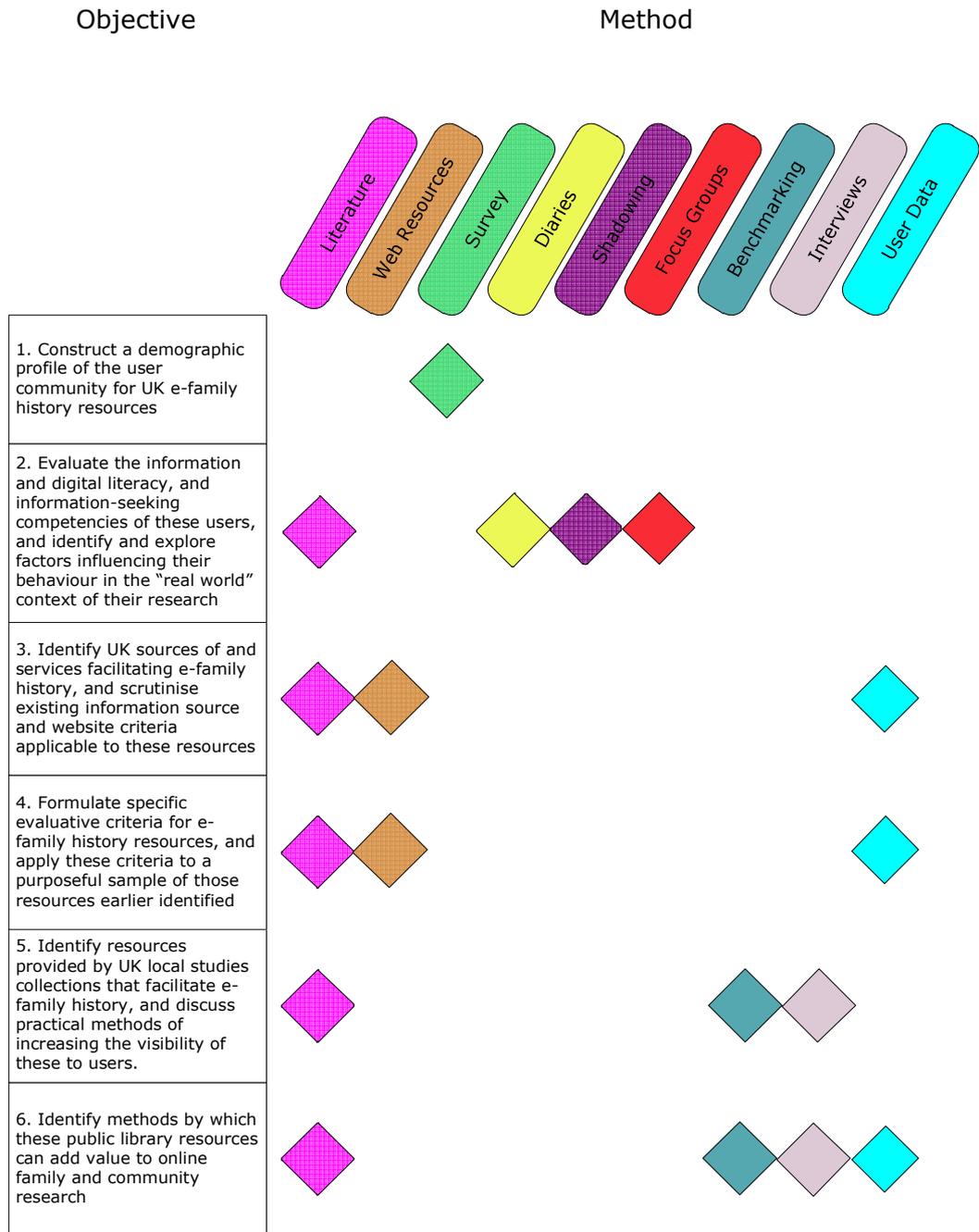
Figure 3.2: Data Collection Plan

Throughout the project, a greater understanding was gained by the researcher of the research areas (and related issues), the size of study and the rapidly changing nature of the field, and therefore the methodology frequently reviewed and refined where necessary. This was particularly the case for the Local Studies strand, where the development of exact methodological specifications was informed by earlier findings. The flow of data between collection methods is modelled in Figure 3.3.
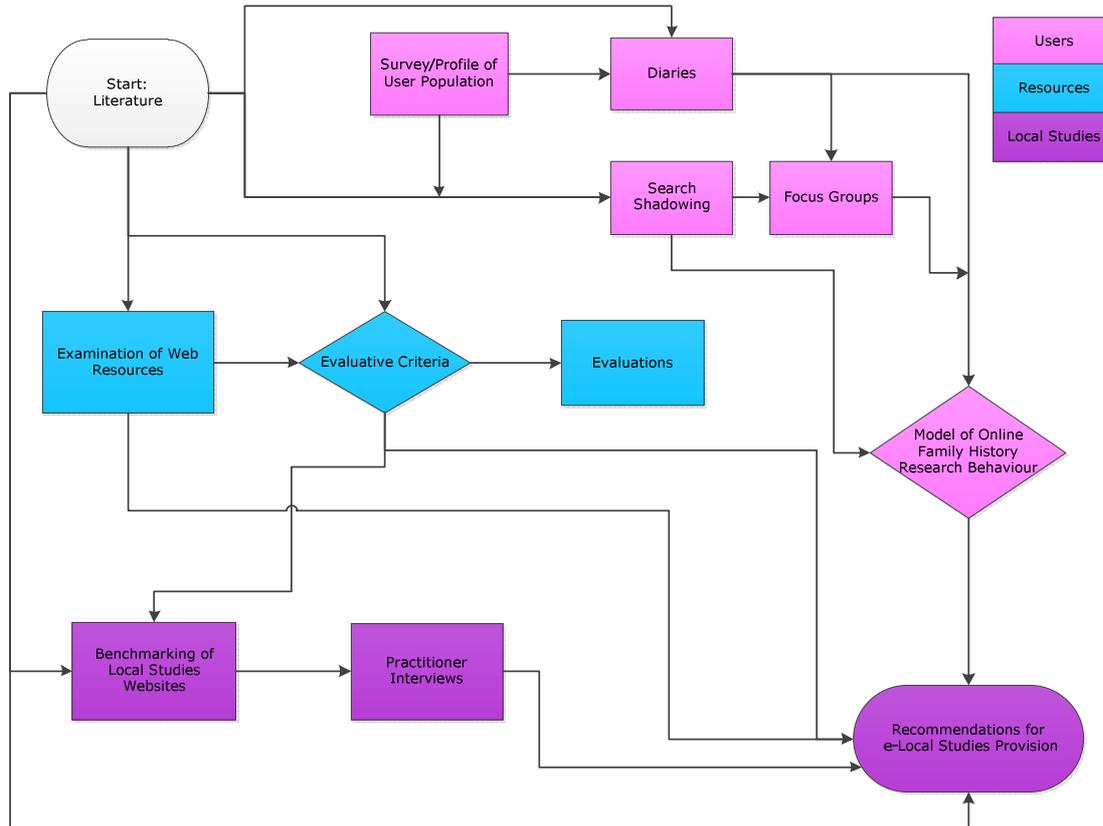
Figure 3.3: Flow of Data

The diagram illustrates the order in which the various data were collected in each research strand. As mentioned above, the flexibility afforded from a largely qualitative research approach (Gorman and Clayton 2005) allowed earlier rounds of data collection to influence and inform the exact later research designs and data-gathering, specifically the focus groups, benchmarking, and interviews. More detail will be discussed in later sections of this chapter.

3.3 *Literature Retrieval*

"Traditional" LIS academic and professional literature was consulted largely through major databases such as *Library and Information Science Abstracts, Emerald, Library Literature Online,* and *Web of Knowledge*. Archival literature was also found to be an excellent source of user studies involving genealogists. Professional or practice-based library literature was, largely, drawn from US library journals and mostly practical in nature, e.g. highlighting resources. Whilst initially helpful to the investigation, as time progressed the relevance and usefulness of these articles diminished, particularly where focused on US resources. Notably, much useful information was accessed from (often instructional) literature produced by and for the

genealogical community, both mass market and academic publications, in print and online. Although the more scholarly of these were indexed in some of the databases above, access to others was gained through the Internet. Genealogy blogs were also a valuable source of material. Literature was also retrieved via *Google* and *Google Scholar*.

Keywords were derived from the three central foci of the research, together with information literacy, information-seeking and their related concepts. Through the use of truncation searching, Resource and User literature were retrieved with the same set of words (i.e. genealog* would produce genealogy, genealogical and genealogist). Table of Contents alerts were also created for particular journals, keywords and authors using *Zetoc*[88] to ensure currency with relevant literature. This was also ensured through monitoring of subject blogs, podcasts, and news alert services. In addition to research texts, literature was also sought from academic sources regarding the data collection methods utilised, drawn from both outside and within the LIS field. This ensured access to a wide range of perspectives in their application; these works subsequently informed the design and execution of the data collection instruments. A list of search terms used can be found in Appendix 1. Although retrieved, literature concerned with Information Literacy has not had as much of a bearing on the literature review as originally envisaged; nor on the investigation.

3.4   Ethics

Family history searchers have a lot at stake in their research. It is personal. It is family. It is their heritage and may influence their future. (Davidsson 2004)

This research deals with participants' approaches to researching their private and personal history; although the "results" of participants' enquiries were not of primary concern, they did have the potential to affect participation and attitudes towards the study. Some researchers would not be disturbed by the discovery of a "skeleton in the closet", but many take great pride in their family history, and the revelation of an incident such as illegitimacy (and resulting family irregularities), bankruptcy, murder, incest or other criminality, may have a negative effect and prejudice their attitude to any subsequent involvement in the investigation. This was recently illustrated by actress Patsy Kensit, who initially abandoned

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[88] Table of Contents Alert service for the British Library.

filming an episode of the fifth series of *WDYTYA?* following unwelcome revelations about her grandfather (BBC News 2008); and within the research of Kramer (2010). Sensitivity to this was maintained throughout, and it was important to stress to participants that any such discovery would have no any prejudicial effect on the research.

All aspects of the research were conducted with fairness, integrity and professionalism, and in accordance with the Robert Gordon University's *Research Ethics Policy* (2008). This requires all researchers to operate with appropriate ethical conduct, primarily involving the consideration and planning of studies. They must give due consideration of the impact of the research, including the potential implications of research for subjects/participants; for non-participants, and the uses to which research can be put. Appropriate relationships must be maintained with stakeholders, with the welfare and treatment of participants at the forefront, particularly with regard to informed consent; confidentiality; anonymity, and the consideration of vulnerable respondents. All work must be conducted with competence and integrity, and results disseminated in an appropriate manner. As part of the proposal stages of the research, these factors and any action required to ensure adherence to the policy must be presented for consideration by the Robert Gordon University's Research Ethics Sub-committee, prior to final acceptance of the research proposal.

During the study, only necessary data was requested from those involved, and sensitivity to participants' research results was maintained throughout. Various steps were taken to safeguard anonymity and confidentiality, and to ensure the welfare and interests of participants. Informed consent was obtained before participation in any stage of the research. Potential participants were provided with printed or electronic information detailing the extent of their involvement. This included: the background and entirely voluntary nature of the study, their likely time commitment; what data will be collected; and how the data will be stored and used within the research. They then signed (or completed electronically) a consent form. Consideration was also given to a participants' wish to withdraw, which they were made aware they could do at any time. Any data they had already submitted (for example in the diary study (3.7.3) would remain within the dataset, unless they felt strongly enough to request its' extraction.

Individual participants and collections were consistently kept anonymous through the use of codenames (3.9), both within the final report and within data storage. Some individual local studies collections have been named for the purpose of highlighting good practice. All data was securely stored in either a locked file (paper), or on a password protected server (electronic); participants were referenced by codename only. Contact details provided by participants were kept separate from the collected data; this was facilitated by storing a reference file, the only document showing the links between codenames and contact details, securely in an independent location. Further permission was gained prior to audio recording encounters; these recordings were destroyed following their transcription. The analysis of collected data, and investigation of literature and resources, was performed in a balanced and objective manner. Fair representation was also observed in the assessment of library resources: criticism given was constructive, as the goal of the research is not to "name and shame", but to highlight and promote good practice.

In terms of communication of this with participants, an ethical statement (Appendix 2) was prepared for participants and other interested parties, with the intent of providing reassurance and increased confidence with regard to the ethical principles behind the study. The statement emphasised the interests of the research, the steps taken to ensure anonymity and fairness, attitudes to sensitive information, and stressing the voluntary nature and the right to withdraw. This was placed on the website, and distributed with all research instruments and materials.

3.5   *Research Website*

An additional important aspect of the research has been the development of a project website. Entitled *Researching e-Genealogy[89]*, its original purpose was to provide a web presence for the project and house the online survey. However, it has subsequently become valuable in promoting and disseminating information about the research. The site (Figures 3.4, 3.5) was constructed between June and August 2005 using Macromedia Dreamweaver 8; it now hosts the results of the survey.

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[89] Friday, K., 2005. *Researching e-Genealogy.* [online] Available at: http://www.researchingegenealogy.co.uk

Figure 3.4: Research Website: Title Page
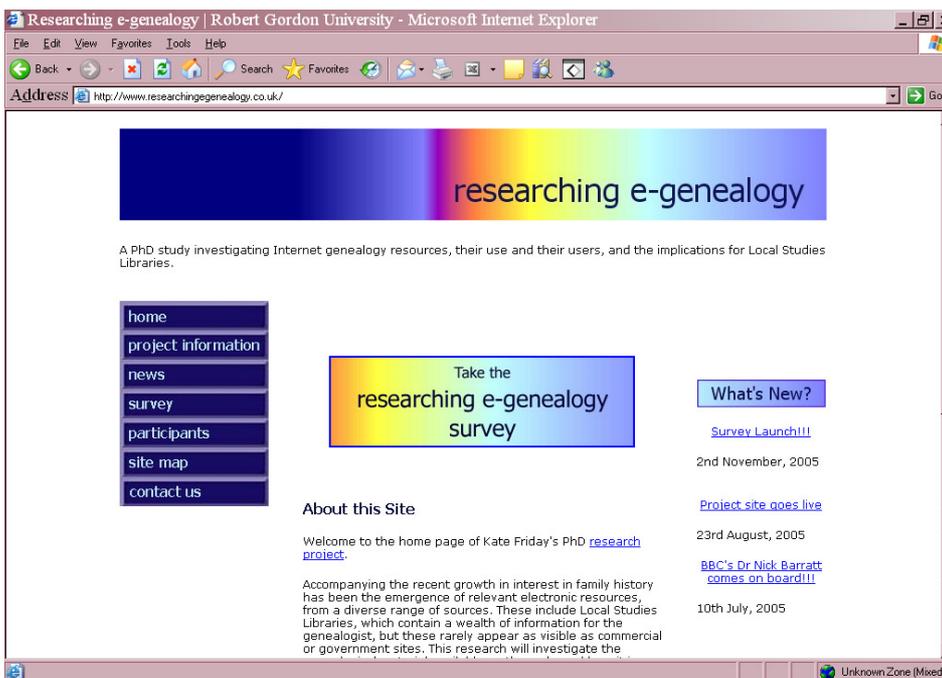
Figure 3.5: Research Website: Home Page

3.6   Resources

The method for the Resources strand involved the preparation of evaluative criteria for
e-local studies/family history, and eventual application to selected resources. Numerous
evaluative criteria have been developed and reported in the Library and Information Science
literature, both subject-specific and more general, but none so far had been formulated for

e-family history, likely due to their diversity and complexity. In addition to addressing this gap in the literature, their purpose is to assist and increase awareness and understanding of the particularities of these resources among library professionals considered key to adequate support of researchers (Paul 1995; Webster 2005; Barber 2007). They will be extremely useful with direct practical applicability to information workers in the field.

Compilation of the criteria utilised the results of initial development work, the examination of numerous family history resources, and consultation of a number of works (5.2). These include standard reference works, evaluative criteria for Internet information, genealogical commentary and instructional works, and criteria for local studies and historical material. After distillation of the relevant points, nine headings were identified as relevant for e-family history resources.

- Resource Provider;
- Scope and Coverage;
- Genealogical Significance;
- Types and Formats of Content;
- Accuracy and Reliability;
- Cost;
- Design and Presentation;
- Usability and Accessibility; and
- "Uniqueness".

Provider	Scope and Coverage	Types and Formats
Cost	Genealogical Significance	Uniqueness
Accuracy and Reliability	Design and Presentation	Usability and Accessibility

Figure 3.6: Matrix of e-Family History Evaluative Criteria

These are further expanded and defined when the criteria are presented in full (5.3). Taking inspiration from Cooke (2001), the criteria have been designed to operate at a number of different levels, depending on the exact requirements of the evaluator. This is particularly evident within the areas of types/formats of content, genealogical significance, and scope and coverage. The above matrix of e-family history evaluative criteria (Figure 3.6) was developed in order to present the criteria in a memorable, truncated and more practically applicable manner, for use by information workers in the field. A slightly expanded version is presented with the criteria (5.3, Figure 5.1.) Resources for evaluation were purposively selected from those used and reported by participants, ensuring coverage of both the most significant resources, illustrating each section of the criteria as appropriate.

3.7   Users

3.7.1   Survey

With the caveat that one's target population must be technologically savvy enough to use it, persuasive arguments…include extreme cost reduction and quick turnaround time, facilitative interaction between survey authors and respondents, collapsed geographic boundaries, user-convenience, and, arguably, more candid and extensive response quality. (Smith 1997)

The purpose of the survey, conducted between November 2005 and April 2006, was to demographically profile[90] the user community for UK e-family history resources, in turn better informing local studies organisations of both (a) the scope and (b) the make-up of the potential users that could be assisted. An online survey method was selected as it was economical in terms of both time and cost, and in keeping with the topic under investigation (Smith 1997). Already users of web resources, respondents were considered to possess at least some degree of digital literacy and familiarity with the format (Coomber 1997). A largely exploratory exercise, the method of survey allowed gathering of data from a great number of respondents, covering an extensive geographic area. It also facilitated the collection of data from each submission in identical electronic format (Smith 1997).

Questionnaires or surveys are commonly regarded as the most frequently used of any research method, both in academic research and elsewhere. The potential to asynchronously

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[90] As far as possible.

collect large amounts of data in identical formats is balanced against the potential of low/non-response, and the lack of opportunity for clarification. Conducting such data gathering online is a more recent but now well-established method. Coomber (1997) notes that a database or statistical package behind the survey page has the "double benefit of (a) providing inputted data ready for analysis, and (b) as these packages will store only the fields specified", disguising the origin of the data and ensuring respondent anonymity. In more recent times, numerous web-based services such as *Survey Monkey*[91] or *Question Builder*[92] have made this increasingly accessible to less technically-minded researchers; Wright (2006) has reviewed some individual merits and limitations of these.

Boncheck *et al.* (1996) note that survey length is an issue in encouraging survey completion, but that a recommended length is not yet established for the web; however, it is generally recommended that self-completion questionnaires are reasonably short (Robson 2002). Although the problem has improved as web technologies have advanced, differences in browsers mean researchers still have limited control over the appearance of the survey to respondents (Pickard 2007). Coomber (1997) emphasises the need for invitations and advertising of a web survey, which "must be interesting enough to get noticed and secure responses"; Wright (2006) advises that researchers must establish the credibility of the survey in the invitation. Re-posting requests on newsgroups is also recommended to ensure visibility to new site visitors. Other suggestions include banner advertising on high-traffic sites, and advertising in traditional media such as newspapers and magazines (GVU 1998). Both Coomber (1997) and Fisher, Margolis and Resnick (1996) stress the importance of "netiquette", and especially the avoidance of "spamming" invitations, by posting only on fora and mailing lists relevant to the subject of the survey. Invitations are frequently regarded as spam, as potential respondents can be suspicious of the researcher's identity or agenda (Smith 1997); invitation posts may even be deleted by list moderators (Wright 2006). Kaczmirek (2005) emphasises three general principles for both the questionnaire and any recruitment activities: be user-friendly, trustworthy and explicit.

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[91] SurveyMonkey, 2011. *SurveyMonkey: Free online survey software & questionnaire tool* [online] Available at: http://www.surveymonkey.com [Accessed 2 February 2011]

[92] QuestionBuilder Survey Software, 2011. *QuestionBuilder* [online] Available at: http://www.questionbuilder.com/ [Accessed 2 February 2011]

Fisher, Margolis and Resnick (1996) observed "there is no comprehensive list of individuals who use the Internet, nor is there any certainty about how many users log on from any particular node"; that is, the sampling frame is undefined. Tools such as visitor counters do not register repeat visits (Smith 1997), and as a result multiple submissions could be received from one respondent (Pickard 2007). More significantly, however, this also means that there is no way of selecting participants at random (GVU 1998; Smith 1997), which inevitably reduces the generalisability of results. Respondents will be limited to those with Internet access, introducing an element of sampling bias (Coomber 1997); however, this is less of an issue over a decade later, when Internet access is far more prevalent in society, or where Internet users are the population under investigation. Likely to be of more significance is the issue of self-selection common in most surveys, in which respondents' characteristics and behaviour "may differ significantly from those users who did not participate" (GVU 1998); again a necessary consideration when generalising findings.

Questions were grouped into a number of different sections, each concerned with a different aspect of the user profile. *About You* gathered the main demographics of the genealogists: age, gender, marital status, education and employment status. It had also been suggested that religion (Lambert 1996) and the importance of family (Hornblower 1999; Bishop 2003) may influence the uptake of family history research; therefore these areas were also probed. *Where You Are* determined country of residence, and (where applicable) respondents' location within the UK, or any previous UK residence. *Your Research* addressed respondents' length of experience of family history, and also genealogical society and public library membership. Geographical areas of research in the UK were also explored. *Your Computer and Internet Experience* focused on the length of experience respondents had of both computer and Internet use, and their rating of their respective skill levels, hoping to make some inference about information and digital literacy skills. Also included here was the critical question about the length of use of e-genealogical resources. *Where You Research* identified respondents' research environments, and the speed of the Internet connection used. The full survey is listed in Appendix 3. Questions were largely multiple-choice, where respondents selected the relevant response from a drop-down menu. This design was chosen in order to minimise completion time of the survey and maximise ease of response (Boncheck *et al.* 1996). Check boxes were used where more than one answer may have been

appropriate. The survey was again constructed with Macromedia Dreamweaver 8, using HTML and PHP. Respondents began at an introduction page which clarified the target audience and gave additional information about the survey and the research. Upon clicking "Begin Survey", further information (Figure 3.7) opened in a new window.
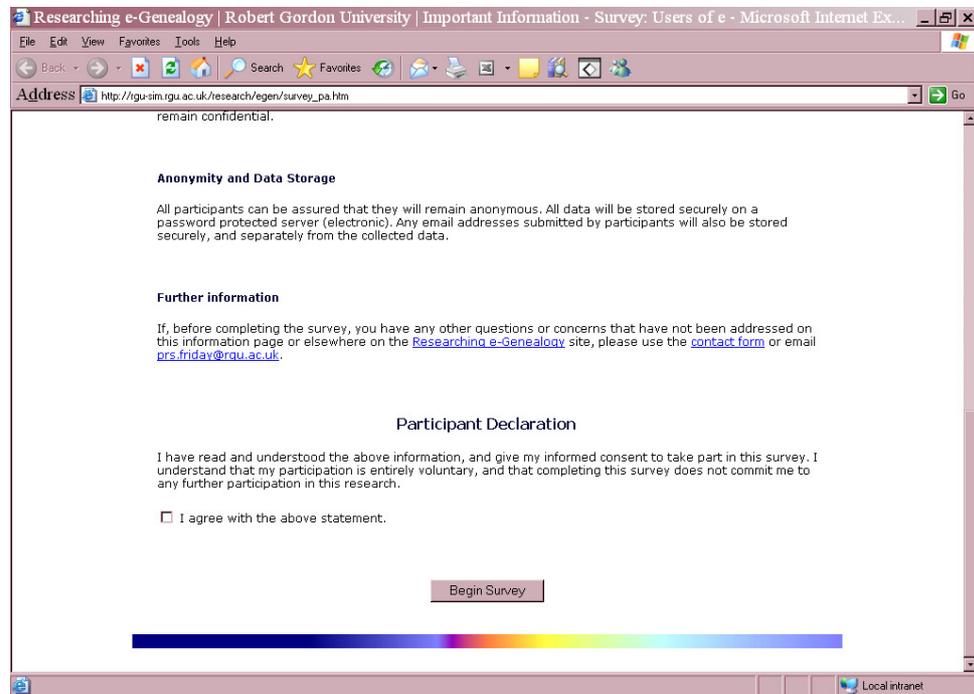
Figure 3.7: Research Website: Survey Information

This informed respondents of the purpose of the survey, use of the data collected, the required time commitment, anonymity and data storage, and the project's ethical approval (Appendix 4). Contact details were also provided should further information be required. This page also served as a mechanism for obtaining respondents' informed consent. Respondents were asked to complete a checkbox to indicate they understood the purpose of the research, and consented to participation. Without this consent the page would simply reload; only if the box was checked by the respondent would the survey (Figure 3.8) launch.
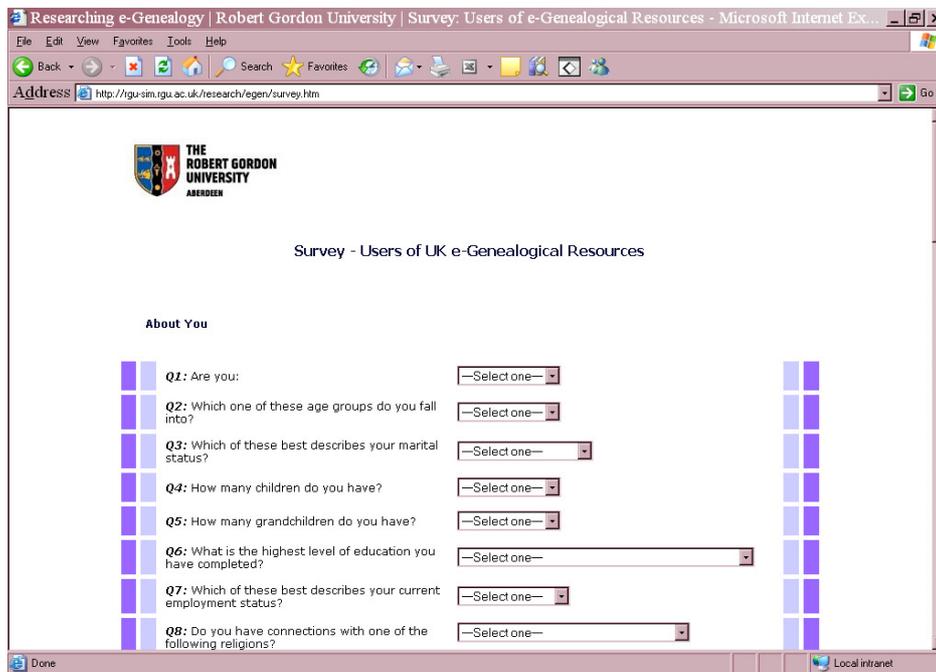
Figure 3.8: User Survey

Data from the submitted survey was anonymously emailed to the researcher; anonymity of the respondents was further ensured (unless they chose to supply an email address) as no logging of IP address or other identifier took place. The survey process is summarised in Appendix 5. Staff and research students at the Robert Gordon University piloted the survey in early October 2005. An email request was issued through various staff and student distribution lists, asking for those who had experience of Internet use within family history research to complete the survey form. 22 responses were received, in addition to feedback. This confirmed the popularity of the subject, and indicated that family historians were quite willing to assist in the research. No technical issues were identified at this stage, and minor grammatical changes were made to the covering email and questions.

The survey was conducted over the period 2 November 2005 to 18 April 2006. It was publicised with a press release from the Robert Gordon University (Appendix 6), resulting in publicity in the local press[93] and both national and international genealogical, family history, and web magazines [94]. In order to reach the target audience, invitations encouraging participation were made on relevant JISCmail lists and message boards, and requests were made for publicity on family history society (FHS) websites. Posters were sent to the main

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[93] Press and Journal; Evening Express; Leopard Magazine.
[94] Your Family Tree; Family History Monthly; Family Chronicle; WebUser Magazine.

local studies collections in each library authority, the Society of Genealogists, LDS Family History Centres, and the major National Archival Repositories and Record Offices (GVU 1998). A short article written by the researcher appeared in a number of family history society journals[95] at various points between December 2005 and April 2006 (Appendix 7). Several webmasters from family history societies reported that the initial approach was commonly interpreted as spam[96] (Smith 1997).

Emailed responses consisted of the coded answer to each of the survey questions, labelled with the relevant question name. The survey was designed in this manner instead of sending the data directly to a database, ensuring that the researcher had direct control of the data and its storage. Each response was saved as an individual text file upon receipt, given a case number as a filename and imported into Microsoft Excel, where data labels could be removed globally. Files were gradually combined into the full data set, which was then imported into SPSS. It is impossible to determine a response rate for the survey. It was estimated that the minimum number of responses required (to generate enough participants for later stages) was 400. This was comprehensively exceeded with a total of 3957 responses received, of which 3949 were usable. Eight responses were excluded from the analysis; 6 submissions completed personal details only, and 2 displayed inconsistencies between answers suggestive of manufactured responses. All data were analysed with the exception of question 20 (extent of computer and Internet use within respondents' place of work); this was due to a coding error which resulted in data for that particular question going uncollected. Of those responding, 93.4% were willing to consider further participation, and supplied an email address to that effect. Responses proved to be a very rich source of data.[97]

3.7.2   *Diaries*

Diaries, solicited from research participants, aim to capture "the sequence, duration, and frequency of behaviours and about the contexts in which they take place" (Bishop 2003). A

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[95] Journals of societies including: Aberdeen and North-East Scotland FHS; Dumfries and Galloway FHS; Clwyd FHS; Calderdale FHS; Liverpool Family Historian; Alberta Genealogical Society; Manchester & Lancashire FHS; Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry; Glasgow & West of Scotland FHS; Genealogical Society of the Northern Territory; North Devon FHS.

[96] Many FHS webmasters reported that they received a large volume of spam email.

[97] Before the conclusion of the survey, a brief statistical analysis was performed on the first 1000 cases. The purpose of this was to assess the level of data that had been collected. This subsequently provided broadly comparable results with the same analysis of the complete data set.

diary method was selected in order to collect data on the 'natural habitat' of the participants' research between October 2006 and April 2007, and minimise any intrusion or influence on their research behaviour or strategy (Toms and Duff 2002). The method is commonly regarded as a substitute for observation, particularly in situations where a researcher cannot be present (Elliot 1997), either for reasons of resources, or sensitive/closed situations which are unobservable. The large geographic spread of potential participants in this case rendered any large-scale observation impractical both in terms of time, resources and logistics. It also allowed the capturing of data over multiple sessions (Gibson 1995), specificity of resources and order of events (Bishop 2003), as well qualitative data on the experience of research (Phillips and Davies 1995). Two other forms are identified by Bryman (2004) in the social research literature; a document (often historical) or a research log. There is a notable lack of discussion of all forms in the majority of social and qualitative research methods texts, which focus primarily on researcher logs. As a method of data collection, diaries are most common in medical, health, psychological studies; however use is increasing throughout all areas.

The diary instrument can vary from a blank page to a more rigid tick-box grid system, although a structured format is by far the most common. Combining different levels of structure two enables the diarist to "include a record of feelings, perceptions and emotions as well as providing a description of the activities in which they are involved" (Phillips and Davies 1995), generating context-rich data. Gibson (1995) notes they are less time consuming and are more effective at capturing longitudinal data. Diaries collect specific information, rather than general (Smith 2000), and can access data on both thoughts and actions, within the context in which it occurs. They are a non-threatening and natural format, highly appropriate for gathering sensitive data, allowing access to the "natural habitat" of the diarist (Toms and Duff 2002). Keleher and Verrinder (2003) considered that diaries are an honest and trusted method, with very low recall error (especially if participants complete an entry at the time or on the same day). Bryman (2004) also notes that they provide "information of the time sequencing of events" (which followed which); this kind of information is much more difficult to glean from questionnaires. Whilst the structured diary as a data collection instrument is quite common, the qualitative/unstructured version is still comparatively rare (Elliot 1997).

Interesting questions are raised concerning the quality and quantity of data gathered. Solicited diaries are highly dependent on participants for the quality and reliability of the data collected. Diarists effectively become co-researchers, and it is important to sustain their interest and motivation. Verbrugge (1980) observed a high quality of data, but the design of the diary instrument can impact heavily on data quality and the motivation of diarists; a longer diary period will yield better data on an individual participant level. Gibson (1995) notes there may be issues with participant literacy and handwriting, and variations in the depth and detail of entries in unstructured studies. Bell (1999) expresses caution because of the significant burden placed on the participants, specifically highlighting the need for clear, precise instructions. Although the diary would require a significant effort from participants, family historians had thus far proved to be a committed and enthusiastic population, inspiring confidence in their cooperation. Keleher and Verrinder (2003) reported that monitoring and support of participants can increase motivation, and the reliability and validity of the collected data.

Francis (1997) advocates a piloting process, and also notes that the format and construction of the diary are "of critical importance", and may in fact affect compliance and completion rates. This is echoed by Suzuki (2004), who notes that the diary should be non-threatening to the participants. Corti (1993) recommends an A4 booklet, supplied with clear set of instructions and model entries of what is expected, along with an operational period long enough to capture the behaviour under examination. She also observes that an unstructured format allows greater freedom for participants to record data in their own way, but that this impacts on the time and complexity of analysis, and therefore should be considered in tandem with the sample size. Unstructured diaries encourage multiple types of content (Toms and Duff 2002); but whilst unstructured formats allow the diarist to record data as they wish, the implications of the vast quantity of data that could be generated and its analysis must be considered. Diaries unfortunately have the problem of self-selection, with only more committed participants likely to complete. Johnson and Bytheway (2001) note that later entries can become less and less inclusive as participants tire, and suggest that diary keeping may affect behaviour in some cases. Rates of attrition (non-completion) tend to be high and extremely variable; typically 40%, but ranging from 5% to 73%. Most attrition

happens early (Lee, Hu and Toh 2004), often directly after recruitment before data collection has even begun.

Deborah Goodall (1994) noted a lack of popularity of diaries within LIS research and subject methodological texts, although this has more recently been addressed by Pickard (2007). Where the method is used, instruments tend to be structured, gather data over short periods, probably because of ease of completion, and used in conjunction with other methods such as the diary interview method, allowing researcher clarification and increased depth of data. Recent examples include Toms and Duff (2002), Rieh (2003), Ryan and Valverde (2005), and Spink (2004), who used qualitative diaries in tandem with non-participant observation. In any case, there are only a handful of instances of use in hundreds of information-seeking or behaviour studies, but this may change in the future, beginning with the present study.

The design of the study was largely influenced by two studies into the information-seeking of genealogists; Bishop (2003) and Yakel (2004). Bishop, aiming to understand how family history researchers "gave meaning to individuals they uncovered in their work", tracked 15 genealogical participants, recruited from genealogical societies, using unstructured diaries over a three month period. He experienced difficulties sustaining researcher enthusiasm for that length of time, with just 11 completing the task. Information collected included the date, time and place of the session; resources used, results; any frustrations felt by the diarist, and perceived next steps in their research. Yakel (2004) investigated (using interviews) issues surrounding the information-seeking and resource selection of genealogists, including the selection of a starting point; use of genealogical and general information on the web; and how information was selected (3.3). The diary contained three sections, to be completed before, during and after the session. Initially, diarists were asked for an indication of what (or who) the participant was looking for information on during the session. This was rephrased into a question allowing for the case of participants having no goal for their session, preventing any influence on their information-seeking. During the session, they recorded the name or URL of the sites in the order of their use, and afterwards gave a narrative description of what happened, also reporting on whether the sought information had been found. Essentially participants were providing two different accounts, from during and after, allowing for personal reflection. Francis (1997) suggests that "[t]he inclusion

within the diary of two or more types of entry may also allow internal validation of the content", which would also integrate the data more closely.

From personal contacts, the researcher identified two informants[98] from the local area who were each observed, 'in context', practising their research in May 2006. These sessions helped clarify the nature of the data likely to be produced, and the desired format of the diary. Paper diaries were found to be easier to complete during actual research (Corti 1993). With the exception of the 3 sections it was unstructured, so as to minimise any affect on research activity. The diary sheets were printed A3 coloured paper (to distinguish the instrument from other material a participant might be working with), and were laid out as illustrated in Figure 3.9.

Figure 3.9: Research Diary

Further piloting took place in July 2006 with a further two personal contacts[99], in order to test the validity of the diary instrument and better gauge the specifications and volume of data produced (Francis 1997); subsequently minor modifications were made to the wording of the diary and diary protocol[100], before finalising the design. In estimating a suitable sample size, taking into account the need to retain validity (Juliens and Michaels 2000) after an expected 40% attrition rate (the average found in the literature), it was decided to conduct the study with 30 participants, each recording 8 sessions. As family history research is a long-term and unpredictable process (indeed described by Phelps (2003a) as a "very long, complicated, unending reference question"), data collection operated over a 6 month period, in order to give sufficient time to record a "snapshot" of participants' research (Gibson 1995). The sampling frame for the Diaries and Focus Groups (3.7.4) consisted of all survey respondents who had expressed an interest in taking further part in the research, with the exception of those with an AB postcode (3.7.3). Following an email invitation to participate in either the diary study or a focus group, a stratified random sample was drawn from those still willing, taking into account gender, age range, location, and genealogical experience (as determined from the results of the survey). Time elapsed since the survey's completion necessitated some restructuring of the bands in the genealogical experience category[101]. Table 3.1 (overleaf) shows the relevant demographic breakdowns.

It was considered important to maintain these demographics in order to try and make the group as representative of the identified population as possible. Payne (1987) notes "stratification can never lead to lower precision", and at worst will make no difference. It was also attempted to obtain the same gender balance across the other categories. Following the sampling process, potential participants were again emailed with an invitation specifically for the diary study. Two potential participants had subsequently become unavailable, and were replaced by others from the sampling frame with identical demographic features.

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[99] Pilot diarist 1 (Male, aged 35-44, had been researching for over 10 years); Pilot diarist 2 (Female, aged 45-54, had been researching for between 1-4 years).
[100] Instructions issued to participants.
[101] Respondents previously classified as <6 months experience would have subsequently gained more, and would now be classified as < 1 year. Other categories remained the same, now giving 4 categories: Under 1 year, 1-4; 5-10; over 10.

Demographic	Breakdown	Percentage
Gender	Male	38.1%
	Female	61.9%
Age	Under 16	0.1%
	16-24	1.3%
	25-34	5.9%
	35-44	13.9%
	45-54	28.1%
	55-64	33.5%
	65-74	14.1%
	75 or over	3.1%
Country of Residence	England	41.3%
	Scotland	14.7%
	Wales	2.2%
	Northern Ireland	0.4%
	CI/IM	0.1%
	United States of America	15.5%
	Canada	10.3%
	Australia	10.3%
	New Zealand	2.5%
	Other	2.5%
Genealogical Experience	Under 1 year	19.4%
	1-4 years	32.2%
	5-10 years	23.6%
	10+ years	24.8%

Table 3.1: Diary responses

Those selected were sent research packs containing: a covering letter; consent form; eight diary sheets; an instruction booklet and sample entries (Bell 1999); a copy of the ethical statement; and pre-paid envelopes[102]. They were asked to record 8 research sessions during the period October 2006 to March 2007, return the completed consent form with the first diary entry, and return the remaining sheets in batches. This gave the opportunity for the researcher to provide feedback on the completion of the diary, if necessary, at an early stage, and monitor entries. Additionally, any data loss in the postal system would be restricted to one batch. Most diarists adhered to this, but some sent all entries back together. Email reminders were sent to diarists in early January and late March 2007 (Keleher and Verrinder 2003), aiming to both increase motivation and strengthen contact. A number of participants requested more time to complete the diaries, and the deadline was extended until the end of April 2007. Diaries were returned by 23 participants, giving an attrition rate of 23%. Given the literature average of 40%, this was extremely successful, and shows the high levels of

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[102] International Reply Coupons were supplied to internationally-based participants.

motivation of family historians. Contact was received from two participants to withdraw formally. From a potential maximum of 240, 136 (57%) diary sessions were completed; a summary of responses is given in Appendix 8. Lee, Hu and Toh (2004) noted that "the majority of attrition (drop-outs) takes place during the very early stage of the diary-keeping period; in fact, roughly 70% of all attrition took place immediately after the pre-diary survey". The same occurred in the present study; the majority of diarists completed 0 or 1, or close to the maximum number of entries. A range of demographics dropped out too, although those who had been researching for the least amount of time (though not exclusively) were less likely to complete. This left a slightly more experienced field, but several "newer" researchers were still included.

3.7.3   Search Shadowing

Shadowing was selected as a method in order to directly observe participants, during November and December 2006, carry out their research. It is a form of observation which is rarely appropriately defined, discussed or examined critically in the literature. It can describe "a whole range of techniques and approaches" (McDonald 2005). Observation itself is often categorised as a dichotomy between Participant and Non-Participant, but in practice it describes a "sliding scale of participation" (University of Salford 2000) with varying levels of interaction with the observed (Hirsh 1999; Pickard 2007). Variable levels of structure (Crane n.d.) mean the method can fit either the qualitative or quantitative paradigm (Powell and Connaway 2004, McDonald 2005), although it is considered predominantly a qualitative method Becker and Geer (1982) suggest that "research aimed at discovering problems and hypotheses requires a data gathering technique that maximises the possibility of such discovery", and that less structure increases the chances of this. Shadowing sessions in the present research were semi-participant (Pickard 2007) and also quasi-experimental in places, as there was direction of and interaction with the observed. It was felt that avoiding a completely experimental situation was paramount; a neutral setting designed to mimic 'natural habitat' was used as far as possible.

McDonald (2005) defines shadowing as a "technique which involves a researcher closely following" a research subject for a suitable length of time, openly questioning them (for clarification or depth of understanding) as they go along. She suggests three types of

shadowing: as experiential learning; recording and understanding behaviour; or understanding roles or perspectives, depending on the purpose of the research. The data collected have greater detail, recording a more "focused and specific experience" than likely to be obtained from other methods; "shadowing examines those individuals in a holistic way that solicits not just their opinions or behaviour, but both of these concurrently". It can be used as "a proxy for a diary study in a situation where the target individuals would not, or could not, take on the recording task themselves... [adding] an element of accuracy and impartiality to the recording process". All behaviours and actions are recorded, not just those that participants deem relevant or significant (Powell and Connaway 2004).

Authors have often used the terms shadowing and observation interchangeably in descriptions of their research (Hirsh 1999; Orton, Marcella and Baxter 2000; Eager and Oppenheim 1996). Hirsh (1999) shadowed children, collecting information for an assignment on library computers, who were encouraged to explain information-seeking steps they were taking, or "think aloud". Clarifying questions were asked, and field notes were taken in addition to audio transcripts. Orton, Marcella and Baxter (2000) adopted a "shadowing methodology" to investigate information-seeking behaviour of two UK MPs. Field notes were recorded over several weeks, recording when MPs sought information, or asked others to seek it for them. Shadowing was particularly appropriate as "it was felt that other data collection tools, such as questionnaires, might gather very superficial responses and might be completed by staff members rather than MPs". Eager and Oppenheim (1996) shadowed three academics to observe their information seeking both in and out of the library, noting that the technique was effective as it "is objective and only records what actually happened...in contrast to questionnaires or interviewing, which record the subjects' view of their actions". However, they do warn that the information seeking may be affected by the presence of a researcher. In analytical terms, whilst Orton, Marcella and Baxter let "hypotheses emerge", Eager and Oppenheim pre-determined categories of actions restricting the data collected, thus contrasting between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Each session featured three sections, each of approximately 30 minutes duration, examining different aspects of the research question. Section A was a structured short-query exercise[103]; these were designed to observe how different family historians approached the search for specific types of information and record their "first instinct" source for these (Table 6.2). This grew from the concept of information horizons (Sonnenwald 1999; Savolainen and Kari 2004), exploring which information sources users have in their "field of vision" when seeking information; the importance people give to sources and how likely they are to turn to them This was significant to the research as it indicated which resources were in common use by this participant group, and gave insights into their criteria for source selection. It was also influenced by Kim and Allen (2002), who differentiated between "known item" and "subject" search tasks. Each query required participants to search for a different specific type of information; some had a concrete answer; others were more open with several possibilities. In most cases there were many routes to a solution. It was stressed to participants that it was the process of how they attempted to find the answer which was of interest, rather than whether or not a solution was reached. If a participant wished to use *ScotlandsPeople*[104] or *Ancestry*[105], an account was provided to cover costs. If other commercial sites were used and the participant did not already hold a subscription, they were not required to proceed past a stage where payment was required.

The remainder of the session was less structured, in order to try and replicate a natural research setting and experience. Section B provided an opportunity to observe participants' own research, and was therefore left completely open (Becker and Geer 1982). Section C was devoted to local studies website examination; structuring this was challenging, owing to the vast differences in setup and structure of the websites of local authorities, libraries, and local studies collections. Participants were asked to begin from a common starting point of the local authority homepage[106], and seek out local studies and local history information from the site. Five sites were selected for each candidate: four at random, and one from an area of interest within their research, in order they would have some connection to at least one of the

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[103] Section A was inspired by an academic exercise, run annually by the Principal Supervisor during the MSc Information and Library Studies programme at the Robert Gordon University, which introduced students to searching for genealogical information on certain resources.

[104] brightsolid, 2011b. *ScotlandsPeople.* [online] Available at: http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[105] Ancestry.com, 2011a. *Ancestry.* [online] Available at: http://www.ancestry.com [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[106] This is where, at the time of the session design, the researcher felt most people would begin looking for a library website, an idea confirmed by others. Subsequently however, it became obvious that this was not the case in reality, and was in fact commented on in the focus groups.

sites. Although section B had already been piloted at an earlier stage in the research (3.7.2) in preparation for the Diary study, it was not possible to pilot the other sections owing to the last-minute indisposition of a previous informant, with no time to locate an alternative. The researcher therefore worked through as many alternative approaches to each question as possible to ensure each they could be answered.

Recruitment took place concurrently and in a similar manner to that for the Diaries and Focus Groups (3.7.2). Those within the wider sampling frame with an AB postcode[107] were emailed to confirm their interest in continuing participation; to be directly observed conducting their own research, in addition to some directed activity. Twelve were selected using the same demographic stratification as above (3.7.2). A session was offered at a mutually convenient time, taking place in either Aberdeen Central Library or another convenient library within Aberdeenshire. Those unable to participate were replaced as far as possible with someone of similar demographic characteristics. Eleven shadowing sessions took place during November and December 2006; ten in the local studies department of Aberdeen Central Library, and one in Banchory Public Library. The researcher and participant sat at a public computer terminal for the duration of the session. Each session was recorded (with permission), subsequently transcribed, and field notes were taken. Participants were asked to "think aloud" as much as possible, although some found this easier than others. Sessions varied in length from 75 to 130 minutes, owing to the varying speeds and complexities of research. The format was generally very successful; there was a high level of engagement with the short queries (or "Ancestor Treasure Hunt"), with only 4 or 5 questions throughout the eleven sessions not attempted. Two participants chose to discuss their research in Section B; one had exhausted all her current online opportunities; the other had not brought her *Ancestry* password, and all her research was there. However, a great range of research experiences were observed from the other nine participants and behavioural patterns (particularly the identification of information required) identified in the subsequent coding schemes. One participant did begin to lose interest in local studies websites because he did not perceive a connection to his research. Otherwise, Section C was largely successful in revealing the range of quality and content of sites operated by UK local studies collections. Participant interactions with Northern Irish library websites were

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[107] AB was the local postcode area of the researcher, and those respondents within that area were more accessible for direct observation.

unfortunately not as successful[108] owing to their providing very limited local studies information online.

3.7.4 Focus Groups

Focus groups allowed direct conversations with researchers regarding their use of resources, and exploration of local studies sites (Powell and Connaway 2004), between April and June 2007. They consist of a number of research subjects who discuss the topic under investigation, mediated by a researcher (Pickard 2007). They are a very flexible method, commonly used in product development and market research, and can serve in a study as either the primary source of data, a supplementary source, or an integral part of a multi-method strategy (Morgan 1997). The use of online groups allowed the researcher to gain direct access to family historians overseas without travelling. Group methods have proved extremely successful in website evaluation (Schneider *et al.* 2002); by offering the same resources to several participants at once, for examination, group discussion allowed the direct comparison of experiences and evaluations of local studies, and thus found which elements of sites were consistently (not) discovered. They are useful for gathering opinions and feelings about a topic under investigation (Oklahoma State University 2006), and gathering a range of these in one session. "The value of focus groups lies not in their ability to yield statistically quantifiable data but rather in their ability to provide insight into the viewpoints of a small number of participants" (Schneider *et al.* 2002).

The same schedule of questions is typically repeated between 3 and 5 times (Morgan 1997). Recommendations on group numbers vary throughout the literature, but between 5 and 12 is mostly agreed to be optimal, depending on the study requirements. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) amongst others, suggest that too small a group can result in one member dominating the conversation. However, Morgan (1997) does suggest instances where fewer participants might be preferred, such as a group of experts who "have a high level of involvement" with the subject matter, and therefore much more to say. There can also be varying degrees of structure within the questioning. Powell and Connaway (2004) note that participants can be

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[108] During the shadowing study, very little e-Local Studies content was observed from collections in Northern Ireland, with the only significant online presence observed being that at http://www.ni-libraries.net. Local Studies appeared to be administered differently, falling under the jurisdiction of Education and Library Boards, in contrast to Local Authority control elsewhere. The lack of online content is now beginning to improve, but Northern Irish Libraries were excluded from assessment in the Focus Groups and in the Benchmarking study, given a lack of comparability with the rest of the UK.

less self-conscious and reserved in a group situation compared to an individual interview, and also that researchers can discover "not only what a specific group thinks, but why the group thinks what it does". However, groups can be "susceptible to bias caused by interview setting...faulty questions and an unrepresentative sample", and depend on the ability of the moderator to control and direct the discussion. They recommend using groups in tandem with other methods. Specifically within an LIS context, Powell and Connaway (2004) suggest that groups can be used for resource and service evaluation, and to investigate marketing strategies and information behaviour patterns of groups of users. They also note that "participants could be asked to discuss the sources they use to find information, what types of information they find most useful, how they evaluate the information they retrieve, and what resources or tools would facilitate information retrieval for their specific purpose. The literature does not reflect this use of the method". Thomsett-Scott (2006) highlights the increasing use of focus groups for website evaluation and usability studies, and notes the value of groups at any stage of the design process.

Holding a focus group online by use of Instant Messaging (IM) is much less established in the literature. These sessions are less expensive than face-to-face (F2F) groups, a wider geographical area can be covered than previously possible (Burton and Goldsmith 2002), and an instant transcript of the session is generated by the IM software (Schneider *et al.* 2002; Bryman 2004; Steiger and Göritz 2006). Thomsett-Scott (2006) stresses the need for advance communication with participants with clear and simple instructions regarding the software (installation, connection, troubleshooting) to be used and the date/time and running of the group. Pickard (2007) notes that, as with any online research, participants must be comfortable with the software and with communicating online. She also suggests that the medium may be less intimidating than F2F contact, and that it is easier for all participants to be heard, as everything that is "said" will be seen, although not necessarily in order. This may however impact on the ability of the moderator to adequately follow the conversation. Bryman (2004) agrees that participants may be more forthcoming, with the possibility of anonymity using pseudonyms. Schneider *et al.* (2002) highlight a slightly increased "no show" rate, and the reliance of the group on participants' Internet connections. Underhill and Olmsted (2003) found that online groups produced data with comparable quality and

quantity to that from F2F groups, with the slight caveat that the Internet medium can result in increased conflict between group participants.

Relevant research questions (1.5) and a number of issues earlier identified in the shadowing exercise were explored through Focus Group sessions. Both the shadowing and diaries (3.7.2) had identified which resources were in use, but not consistently the reasoning behind it; this could be specifically asked here. Following the earlier preliminary assessments during shadowing, e-local studies websites could be explored and assessed in a more targeted manner, and more guidance was given to participants to this effect. It was also decided to exclude Northern Irish authorities from this exercise. Sessions were organised into two main areas of questioning, family history e-resources in general, and more specifically e-local studies. The first began with a general discussion on participants' favourite websites for family history research, then questions grew more specific over the course of the session (Oklahoma State University 2006), covering; reasons for repeat use; new resource discovery; navigation to sites; use of search engines; criteria for source selection; criteria for quality and reliability assessments; willingness to pay for information; and general opinions on website design, functionality and usability. The second section began with establishing the level of awareness of local studies collections and websites (prior to the research), and any expectations they had for website content arising from this. Five local studies sites were selected for each group to investigate. Each assortment contained: one Scottish, one London borough, and a further balance of sites from around the country. Group members' impressions and opinions of sites were explored, and the most useful electronic resources discovered were identified. The sessions concluded with discussions concerning participants' "Wish List" for e-local studies and their minimum service-level expectations, and about anything local studies could learn from other sites. The full schedule appears in Appendix 9.

Participant selection ran concurrently with that for the diary methodology (3.7.2). In this case the sample required to be more purposeful, dependent on participant location, but still aimed to be stratified in the same manner as for diaries and shadowing. Using (now defunct)

web service *Frappr*[109], postcodes (and demographics in code form) of potential participants were plotted on an interactive map (Figure 3.10 is indicative of what was produced). This allowed the researcher to identify (a) concentrations of potential participants (and therefore potential venues); and (b) a suitable balance of age, gender and experience for each group.
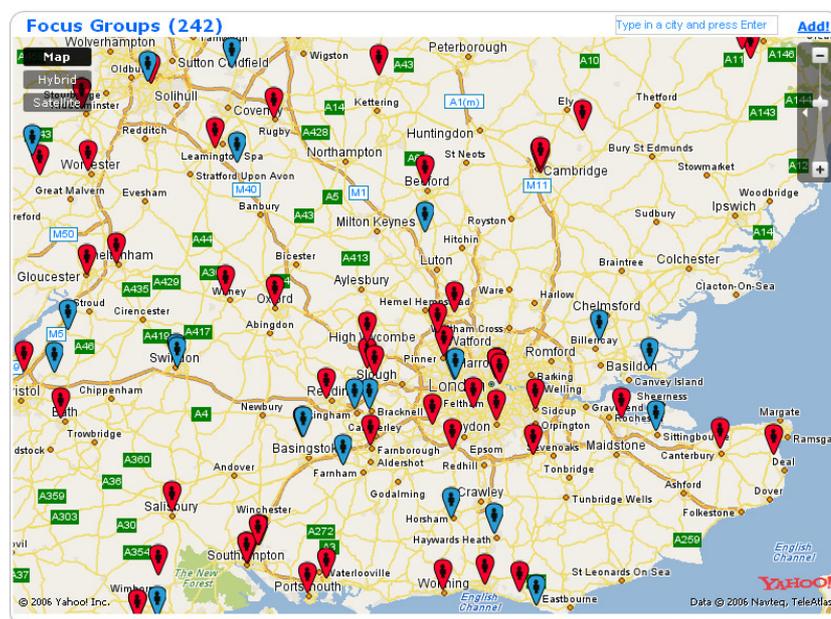
Figure 3.10: Frappr map of participant locations (London)

Approximately eight potential participants (to allow for unavailability) for each group were re-contacted by email with a range of dates, and asked to confirm their availability and date preferences. Once dates for groups were established and attendances confirmed, substitutes could be identified and contacted where required. Potential participants for international groups were grouped into countries with complimentary time zones. Those from New Zealand were more reluctant to participate, and one invitee revealed that his issue was the cost and reliability of his dial-up Internet connection. The survey results indicated that this was a likely common factor discouraging participation, as this type of connection was still prevalent in New Zealand at that time (4.7). Approximately a week prior to each group session, participants were sent confirmation of the details, given a general outline of the areas of questioning, and asked to investigate the five selected local studies sites. Online participants were also sent instructions for software setup and accessing the group chat. The schedule was fully reviewed after the first session, and some minor changes were made to question wording.

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[109] Frappr was a Web 2.0 utility used for mapping communities, used in March/April 2007. Previously available at http://www.frappr.com.

Face-to-face groups were held within the facilities of Public Libraries or Archives, whilst online groups were held using the instant messaging facility of the VoIP service Skype[110]. Table 3.2 lists the relevant details of each group.

	Location	Date	Method	No. of Participants
A	Birmingham	28 April 2007	Face-to-face	5 (5)[111]
B	Stirling	3 May 2007	Face-to-face	3 (5)
C	London (Westminster)	12 May 2007	Face-to-face	3 (6)
D	Online (N. America)	19 May 2007	Skype (IM)	2 (4)
E	Online (N. America)	9 June 2007	Skype (IM)	2 (4)
F	Bristol	30th June 2007	Face-to-face	5 (5)
G	Online (New Zealand)	May/June 2007	Email	2 (4)

Table 3.2: Focus Group Meetings

Group G had to be cancelled due to the late unavailability of some participants[112], although some of those due to take part subsequently answered the questions by email. Contact was received (either in advance or retrospectively) from all other participants not able to attend, with the exception of those missing from the London group, the only one where participant "no-show" was a significant issue (Schneider *et al*. 2002).

It was stressed to participants that the research was interested in their opinions, whether concurrent or divergent from others, rather than perceived "right or wrong" answers. Each participant (and the researcher) was asked to introduce themselves, and give a little background on their family history research. On the whole, group members interacted well together, with only one instance of an individual dominating certain parts of a conversation (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). This unfortunately led to the omission of discussion of a number of areas in that particular group. The researcher found that five participants worked extremely well for group interactions, despite being at the lower end of numbers specified in the literature (Morgan 1997). Skype was found to be an excellent medium for conducting online groups; this was commented on by several participants who had previously felt intimidated by other IM software (such as MSN Messenger).

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[110] Skype, 2011. *Skype*. [online] Available at: http://www.skype.com [Accessed 13th September 2011] VoIP is Voice over Internet Protocol, Skype has a built-in IM facility.

[111] Numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of participants expected.

[112] Due to an emergency eye operation, and a town-wide power outage.

3.8   *Local Studies*

As discussed in section 3.3, the final design of this section took place after the completion of the focus groups, allowing issues which had arisen earlier in the research to be incorporated, with a more concrete conception of data remaining to be gathered. Two methods were employed, benchmarking of websites and email interviews. The benchmarking study aimed to gauge the current level of local studies web provision in January and February 2008. A benchmarking grid gave a structured and fairly informal method of comparing and contrasting elements, allowing content to stand out (Misic and Johnson 1999). Metrics centred on certain absolute items, and relative measures (Misic and Johnson 1999) both of interest to local studies and meaningful to family historians. Metrics were also drawn from the evaluative criteria (5.3).

First emerging from Business and Management research, benchmarking is a comparative and evaluative technique, used to "improve organisations' performance and competitiveness" (Kyrö 2003). Misic and Johnson (1999) state that "the overall goal of benchmarking is to discover the 'best practices' of other organisations and to find ways to integrate these practices into one's own operations. The obvious advantage of this approach is the relative ease and speed with which improvements can be made". They note that this is particularly useful for websites; "In order to value websites, measurement approaches and devices beyond traditional methods have been explored because merely counting hits is not an accurate measure of website quality." They discuss absolute and relative measures; absolute are of concern to all users of a website; relative only relevant to a particular audience. Carpinetti and de Melo (2002) say the technique can be "generically classified according to the nature of the object of study of benchmarking and the partners against whom comparisons are made", in terms of process, product, or strategic benchmarking. The process can be internal or external to an organisation. Depending on the purpose of the exercise, different "metrics" are evaluated or compared. Kim, Shaw and Schneider (2003) noted that, in the context of website benchmarking, metrics and criteria will differ widely by industry. Greenwood and Creaser (2006) suggest that organisations must take care in selecting benchmarking partners (those with which things are compared) to ensure that the like-for-like comparison is as true as possible for their purposes. Kyrö (2003) discusses the expansion of use of the technique outside the private sector, and a need to expand standard

business benchmarking definitions to include this issue: "the basic nature of public services is not to compete with each other, but rather they have been established in order to provide the best possible services as effectively and efficiently as possible. If one organisation succeeds in providing excellent solutions it is suppose [sic] to be open for others as well. The focus is more on cooperation than on competition". Moose and Whitley (2009) note that the technique has been recently adopted by the UK government to ensure meeting of online services targets, where "benchmarking government websites against the private sector is helping to shift the relationship between citizen and the state to one of customer and the state". They suggest great benefit from compelling "organisations to reflect on their own performance in relation to those of other organisations in the same sector, although it carries a danger of implying an 'ideal form'". Scharl, Wöber and Bauer (2004) similarly warn that if the goal of benchmarking is to "improve a certain process", the way in which improvement is made needs to be defined.

Benchmarking data were gathered (between November 2007 to February 2008) in two phases; the first was a quasi-pilot phase, establishing collection details and any required modifications to the grid; the second comprised full collection of the data. Metrics were developed following the findings of earlier e-local studies user assessments from the Shadowing (3.7.3) and Focus Groups (3.7.4), given the materials and issues discovered by participants. A number of similar exercises were also consulted; most influences were drawn from Linton (2007), who compared selected UK and Canadian local studies websites in a subject-specific context, with an emphasis on staff training. Influence was also drawn from the earlier-developed evaluative criteria (5.3). Data were gathered in the following areas (metrics used are given in Appendix 10):

- Service details; contact information and opening hours; enquiry or research services; OPAC;
- Site features and operation; accessibility and metadata, Google rankings[113];
- Local studies online content, provision of databases, links, guidance leaflets;
- Promotional and other features.

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[113] For each site, Google searches were performed on the LA name with a number of related terms. For example: Aberdeen Local Studies. These searches were also performed for pre-1974 counties.

Interviews are often considered to be the method most associated with the qualitative research paradigm (Elliot 1997; Silverman 1998), and are widely discussed within the literature. They (in suitable numbers) are often the only method utilised in a qualitative study. An interview schedule is prepared in advance; it can vary in levels of structure, usually indicative of the level of information expected in response (Robson 2002). Interviews can often be susceptible to interviewer bias. In view of the volume of data already collected, it was necessary to keep further collection to a minimum, whilst still harvesting the vital contribution from practitioners. Email interviews were selected to facilitate this; also in order to minimise any further travel time or costs; interviews conducted by this medium as less widely discusses. Pickard (2007) highlights that fact that the researcher and interviewee do not have to be in the same place at the same time, and that interviewees can reply at their own convenience. There are greatly reduced costs and increased convenience, with no recording, telephone setup, or transcription, as the interview is conducted in electronic text form. Meho (2006) reports little discussion on this as a method in own right, specifically defining it as "Online, asynchronous, in-depth interviewing, which is usually conducted via e-mail...semistructured in nature and involves multiple e-mail exchanges between the interviewer and interviewee over an extended period of time". There has been little use within LIS research, and Meho advocates use for geographically dispersed or reluctant interviewees, concluding that data quality is comparable to F2F or telephone interviewing.

Given the nature of textual e-mail messages, any visual information and communication that may have occurred between actors is lost (Pickard 2007). However, this may be useful when the subject matter is of a sensitive nature, or if participants are affected by physical or speech impairments (Meho 2006). Also, Powell and Connaway (2004) suggest that interviewer bias can be reduced. The schedule can be emailed complete or in sections, although as there is less chance for clarification, questions must be "much more self-explanatory than those posed face-to-face" (Meho 2006). Bryman (2004) suggests that replies can be more reflective and considered, although there is less opportunity for probing. Meho notes that this "may result in missing some important pieces of data" as not all interviewees will respond to follow-up questions. Participant response time, the number of exchanges with the interviewer, the nature and length of the questions asked, and time available from both parties all contribute to overall duration, which can often be quite lengthy (Meho 2006). If

recruitment takes place purely online, problems occur similar to those encountered with online surveys and questionnaires (3.7.1). Invitations distributed to mailing lists and forums are often left unread or immediately deleted, although reminders can help alleviate this issue. Steps must be taken to protect the confidentiality of participants, possibly using codenames, and ensuring that data stored electronically (e.g. email addresses or other identifying information) is not accidentally disclosed (Meho 2006).

Short interviews, conducted in February and March 2008, aimed to gather input from representatives of local studies collections across the UK, from both urban and rural areas. Several practitioners were invited by email to discuss their views on e-family history within their service, focusing on the development of their web presence, both past, present and with projections for the future. The interviewees could complete the schedule at a time convenient to them, and the data would be returned in electronic format, without the need for transcription (Pickard 2007). A positive reception was received from most services, but in some cases it took a number of weeks for the invitation to progress through a backlog of enquiries, and several reminders were sent. Unfortunately some services felt unable to participate due to lack of staff time (7.8). Eventually, data was gathered from 13 local studies collections, three based in Scotland and ten in England (Appendix 12). They represented a variety of the local authorities responsible for library (local studies) provision (Local Government Talent n.d.): four English Unitary; three Scottish Unitary; two London Borough; two Metropolitan District, and two Two-tier Non-Metropolitan Counties. Sadly no collection from either Wales or Northern Ireland was available to participate. Two interviews were carried out by telephone; notes for these were taken by the researcher.

Questioning was largely targeted to include data not gathered elsewhere, exploring local studies practitioners' attitudes and issues within their service to both local and remote family historians. However, as the interviews took place last chronologically, it allowed findings from earlier data collection to be included and expanded upon. Online content and marketing methods identified in the benchmarking could be further discussed, alongside giving greater clarity to some aspects (such as the structure of services), the full picture of which was not always clearly determinable from the website examinations. Issues from the literature were also explored concerning relationships with family historians. Questioning

began with the background to their service, and the context of local studies within the particular library authority. They were asked about their perception of the role of local studies regarding family historians, their impressions or experiences of family historians, and how these were changing. Also discussed were their current service website, its perceived importance and development, service promotion, and the perception of role of e-local studies. Respondents were also asked to give their views regarding features of an excellent local studies site; of family history sites and Internet information. The full schedule is presented in Appendix 11.

3.9   Data Analysis

The nature of the survey questions asked and the structure of the multiple choice answers resulted in mainly categorical or nominal data. Relationships between variables were explored using the SPSS cross-tabulations procedure, and tested using the chi-square test of independence (used to identify associations between two categorical variables). The significance of these associations was quantified using the Cramer's V coefficient of correlation (Field 2000). Numerical and ordinal data from the benchmarking grid were largely analysed in Microsoft Excel, focusing mainly on frequencies of occurring features. One key consideration in the presentation of benchmarking data was (except in cases of exceptional best practice) to avoid implying an "ideal form" for e-local studies (Moose and Whitley 2009) for websites and content.

Qualitative data was analysed within a larger cross-method framework, following a process of inductive thematic analysis. Powell and Connaway (2004) note "two principles of qualitative data analysis are quite consistent in virtually all descriptions of it"; "first it is an ongoing process that feeds back into the research design right up to the last moment of data gathering. Second, whatever theory or working hypothesis eventually develops must grow naturally from the data analysis rather than standing to the side as an a priori statement that the data will find to be accurate or wanting." Therefore analysis not a separate phase of the research process, and is integrated with data collection. As already described, the later stages of the research design were influenced by preliminary results and experiences of initial data collection (3.3, 3.8). Finch (1987) summarises the stages of analysis as: "initial familiarization

with the ideas arising; comparing a list of key themes; systematically indexing all the data; charting the data's themes, refining the charted material; and describing the emergent story." Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the process as "familiarizing yourself with your data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; [and] producing the report." Although analytic themes and structures were not pre-determined, there would inevitably be the influence of the research questions, ideas expressed in the literature, and previous analysis that had occurred. "The theoretical lens from which the researcher approaches the phenomenon, the strategies that the researcher uses to collect or construct the data and the understandings that the researcher has about what might count as relevant or important in answering the research question are all analytic processes that influence the data" (Thorne 2000). Thomas (2003) also notes that within an inductive analysis, research questions bring a deductive element to the process, and that the individual researcher has a crucial impact on the resultant themes.

User coding took place in several progressive stages, with the assistance of analysis program NVivo, which was used to keep track of, and refine codes. Each stage involved refinement of codes, as some were merged and were expanded, a process of "progressive focusing" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983) to "identify recurrent issues and key themes arising from the data" (Phillips and Davies 1995). The final coding scheme can be found in Appendix 13. Figure 3.11 illustrates the sources of data for the presentation of results.
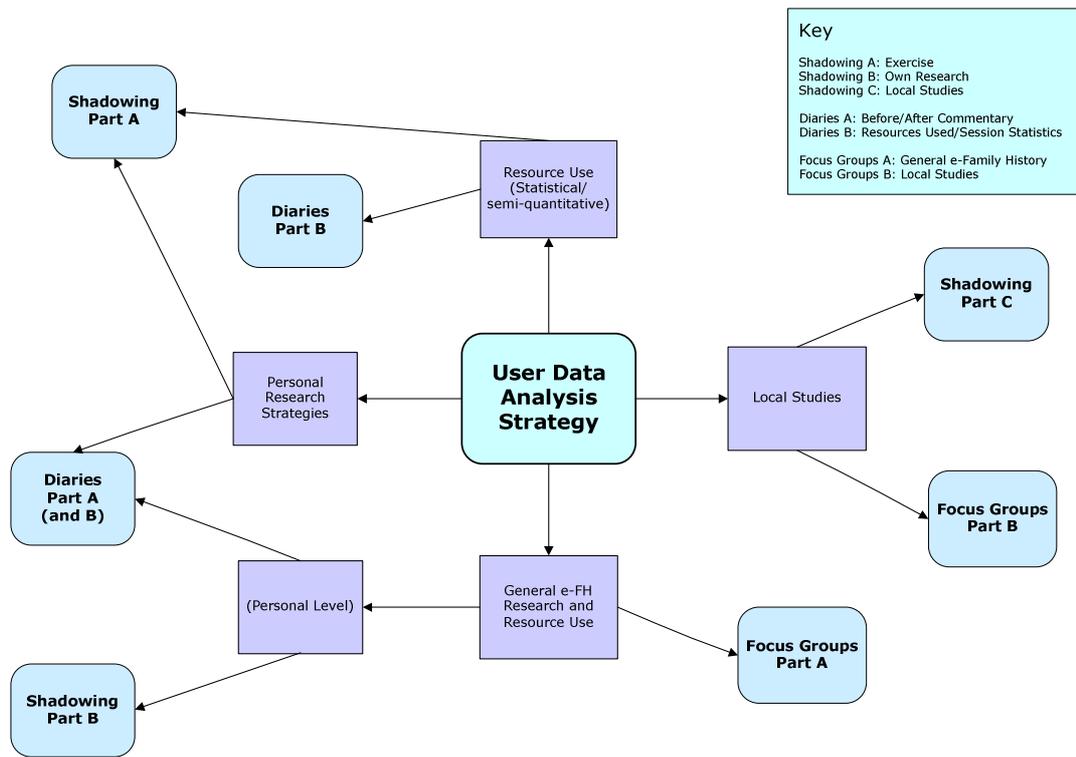
Figure 3.11: User Data Analysis Strategy

Analysis of the local studies interviews similarly followed a general inductive approach; however, due to the lesser volume of data, these were identified manually instead of with computer-assistance. An important part of analysis was comparing this data to that collected in benchmarking. References to Participants, and subsequently individual data streams, within the text are made by codename. Codenames are numbered by order of recruitment to the study, and in the case of Focus groups, by the order in which group members spoke, and prefixed by a letter indicating the stage of research participation, as demonstrated in Table 3.3.

Method	*Prefix*	*Example*
Diaries	D	D06; D28
Shadowing	S	S6; S11
Focus Groups	F; plus Group Reference (A-G)	FA2; FF5
Interviews	LS	LS1;LS6[114]

Table 3.3: Explanation of Participant Codenames

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[114] Two members of staff responded from Collection LS2, each completing the entire schedule. These are labelled LS2a and LS2b respectively. Similarly the response from Collection LS9 came in two parts, but in this instance a Local Studies practitioner and a Web Editor completed the schedule between them. All data in this case were labelled as LS9.

Some statistical data were gathered and analysed, specifically with regard to frequency of resource use (and the frequency of mentioning), mostly from participants' diary entries. This was collated and analysed in Microsoft Excel. These included the duration and location of the research session, and resources used.

3.10   Summary

This chapter has set out and explored the research approach and methods of data collection. The study uses a hybrid, or crossover design, incorporating more than one research approach. This is primarily ethnographic, but also incorporates elements of evaluation research. A wide range of data collection methods were used to investigate the three central strands: users, resources, local studies, and the intersections between these areas from a user perspective. The first step to be taken in the exploration of family historians and their online research behaviour is to construct a demographic profile of the user community for UK e-Family History resources; and it is to this that we turn in Chapter 4.

One question that seems to have been overlooked in all this, however, is "Who are the people doing genealogical research in libraries today?" While most librarians who deal with genealogists have wondered about this question, it has received little serious study...promote a more general awareness of the type of person doing genealogical work at the library, which would be useful for all Newberry staff members. It might also do something to alter some of the "little old lady in tennis shoes" stereotype with which genealogists are often saddled. (Sinko and Peters 1983)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the demographic profile of the user community for United Kingdom-based[115] e-family history resources[116], as derived from the results of the online survey[117] executed between October 2005 and April 2006 (3.7.1, Appendix 3). Like Sinko and Peters above, the study sought to understand more about these users, given the explosion in genealogy's popularity and new expanded possibilities of remote access to Library Collections and information from worldwide locations. Indeed, in a study of members of a Canadian genealogical society, Lambert (1996) found that over 90% of his respondents could trace their ancestry back to the UK. This study therefore hopes to better inform local studies organisations of the scope of the potential user group that could benefit from their services and materials; and a better knowledge of who they are, where they are located, and their likely experience levels. The present survey was of an exploratory nature, designed to identify and illustrate the user population at the time of execution (2005/2006).

The demographics of society have a significant influence on much social research (Hobcraft and Joshi 1989). Likewise, understanding of trends in the general population is an important factor in creating a profile of a user group, giving a deeper indication of which traits are a

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[115] As defined in 1.5, these may be based in the United Kingdom, or contain data pertaining to the United Kingdom.
[116] As previously noted (1.1), there has been a definite change of terminology during the course of this research. Although family history, family historians and e-family history are now the preferred terms used throughout the thesis, genealogy, genealogists and e-genealogy will be used, within this chapter in particular, as this was the language presented to participants during the survey.
[117] Branded on the research website and graphical advertising as the *Researching e-Genealogy* online survey.

reflection of wider society, and which are likely indicative of your population. Survey responses will therefore be compared to general (largely census and other government) demographic data; these will primarily be from the United Kingdom, but will draw in data from elsewhere where appropriate. Inevitably, the results are indicative of the time period of the data collection; the results will date extremely quickly, with implications for the generalisability and future comparability of the data. Despite these reservations, the data still provide a valuable insight into the user community. As previously discussed (3.7.1), although there is no actual response rate for the survey, 3949 usable responses were gathered. The sum of the categories within an individual question may not total 3949 if a respondent has failed to supply an answer to that specific question. Additionally, in some cases the totals of percentages may not be exactly 100% owing to rounding.

4.2   *Population*

Most respondents to the survey were UK resident (59.7%). It had been expected that the majority of the users of UK e-family history information would be UK-based, but there was a higher than initially expected proportion of use from respondents based outside the UK. A detailed breakdown of respondents' locations is given in Table 4.1.

With hindsight, the numbers of respondents outside the UK were also predictable, with USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa having major emigrant communities from the United Kingdom (Familyrecords.gov.uk n.d.; 1.2). Figure 4.1 illustrates the distribution of internationally-based respondents.

Country of Residence	Frequency	%
United Kingdom	2349	59.68
United States of America	599	15.22
Canada	398	10.11
Australia	397	10.09
New Zealand	97	2.46
France	14	0.36
Ireland	11	0.28
South Africa	10	0.25
Belgium	7	0.18
Netherlands	6	0.15
Germany	5	0.13
Spain	5	0.13
Cyprus	3	0.08
Norway	3	0.08
Argentina	2	0.05
Poland	2	0.05
Portugal	2	0.05
Sweden	2	0.05
Switzerland	2	0.05
United Arab Emirates	2	0.05
Afghanistan	1	0.03
Antigua and Barbuda	1	0.03
Austria	1	0.03
Belarus	1	0.03
Chile	1	0.03
Finland	1	0.03
Guyana	1	0.03
Iceland	1	0.03
Indonesia	1	0.03
Italy	1	0.03
Jamaica	1	0.03
Japan	1	0.03
Jordan	1	0.03
Luxembourg	1	0.03
Malaysia	1	0.03
Oman	1	0.03
Puerto Rico	1	0.03
Tanzania	1	0.03
Thailand	1	0.03
Turkey	1	0.03

Table 4.1: Locations of Respondents by Country

Country of Residence (Internationally-based Respondents)
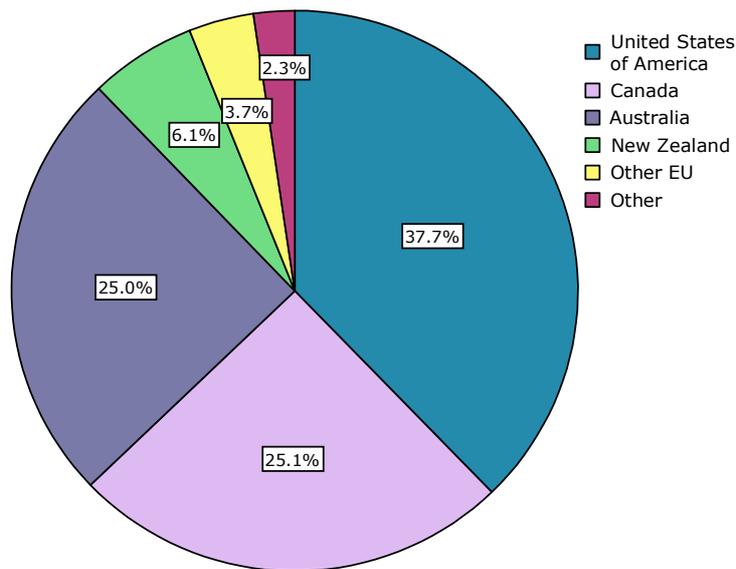
Figure 4.1: Location of Internationally-based Respondents

In the remaining analysis, the UK (or constituent parts), United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand will be considered when comparing the population by location; additional countries are grouped under 'Other'. This was considered to permit the most meaningful analysis of the data.

4.3   Personal details

Genealogists are stereotypically considered to be predominantly female (Smolenyak Smolenyak 2003). However, with 1502 (38.1%) male and 2439 (61.9%) female respondents to the survey, these results do not present as distinct a difference as might be expected. With a 49% (male) to 51% (female) distribution within the general UK population (National Statistics n.d.) and similar distributions in the main responding countries (CIA 2008), females are certainly not predominant in this instance, suggesting "the myth that genealogists are overwhelmingly female and elderly seems clearly to be untrue" (Sinko and Peters 1983). As Table 4.2 shows, the highest proportion of females was found in Australia and New Zealand, with the Other Countries much more even between the genders (chi-squared=28.211 with 5 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.085).

Country of Residence		Gender	
		Male	*Female*
United Kingdom	*Freq.*	940	1403
	%	40.1%	59.9%
United States of America	*Freq.*	216	382
	%	36.1%	63.9%
Canada	*Freq.*	156	242
	%	39.2%	60.8%
Australia	*Freq.*	109	287
	%	27.5%	72.5%
New Zealand	*Freq.*	32	65
	%	33.0%	67.0%
Other	*Freq.*	45	51
	%	46.9%	53.1%

Table 4.2: Gender of Respondents by Country of Residence

The age distribution of respondents was found to be broadly as expected, given family history's reputation as a hobby which is stereotypically pursued by older people. As shown in Figure 4.2, the majority of respondents fall into the 45-54 category or above.
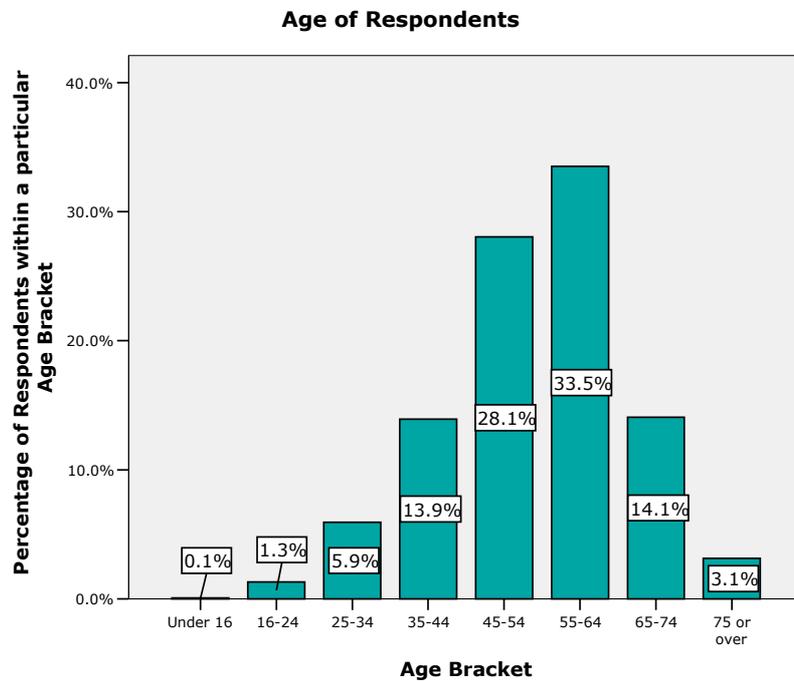
Figure 4.2: Age distribution of Respondents

These findings must also consider the general trend of aging in the population as a whole in the last 50 years; "In 1951, those aged 50-59 represented 43.0 per cent, and those aged 85 and over made up just 1.6 per cent of the 50 and over population. In 2003 the two age groups represented 37.8 per cent and 5.5 cent respectively of the older population" (National Statistics n.d.). These proportions are projected to increase further in the next 20 years. Age distributions of male and female respondents are compared in Table 4.3, also illustrating the male:female ratio in each age bracket.

Age Bracket	Gender				Ratio (M:F)
	Male		Female		
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	
Under 16	1	0.1	1	0.0	1:1
16-24	17	1.1	34	1.4	1:2
25-34	66	4.4	165	6.8	2:5
35-44	181	12.1	364	15.1	≅ 1:2
45-54	361	24.1	734	30.4	≅ 1:2
55-64	508	33.9	806	33.4	≅ 5:8
65-74	292	19.5	260	10.8	≅ 9:8
75 or over	74	4.9	49	2.0	≅ 3:2

Table 4.3: Age Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Although not particularly strong, the association between age and gender is highly significant (chi-squared=103.743 with 7 df, $p<0.0005$; Cramer's V=0.163). Women are more dominant in the earlier age groups, with a higher proportion of men in later years. Interestingly, this higher ratio of men in the older categories is reversed in the general population (National Statistics n.d.). Males are more prominent before the age of 30, where although proportions reverse, they remain fairly even until the age of 60. At this point the gap substantially widens substantially, culminating in a 3:1 female:male ratio for those aged 90 and above. Table 4.4 shows the patterns of age distribution by country. The distribution of ages from UK respondents was in general younger than those of 'other countries' (chi-squared=94.063 with 35 df, $p<0.0005$; Cramer's V=0.069). In all cases, respondents' ages were concentrated between 35 and 55; the UK and USA with the highest proportion of younger people, and New Zealand and Canada the oldest.

Age Bracket		Country of Residence					
		UK	USA	Canada	Australia	NZ	Other
Under 16	*Freq.*	1			1		
	%	0.0			0.3		
16-24	*Freq.*	30	14	3	2	2	
	%	1.3	2.4	0.8	0.5	2.1	
25-34	*Freq.*	146	41	17	16	1	11
	%	6.3	6.9	4.4	4.1	1.0	11.5
35-44	*Freq.*	349	79	43	48	11	16
	%	14.9	13.3	11.0	12.2	11.5	16.7
45-54	*Freq.*	688	156	102	112	21	19
	%	29.5	26.2	26.2	28.4	21.9	19.8
55-64	*Freq.*	770	182	126	153	38	38
	%	33.0	30.6	32.3	38.7	39.6	39.6
65-74	*Freq.*	298	90	75	55	21	11
	%	12.8	15.1	19.2	13.9	21.9	11.5
75 and over	*Freq.*	53	33	24	8	2	1
	%	2.3	5.5	6.2	2.0	2.1	1.0

Table 4.4: Age of Respondents by Country of Residence

Although not having a direct bearing on service provision, marital status can be a useful indicator in a demographic profile, in terms of understanding the ethos of the user group. As shown in Table 4.5, the user population were predominantly married.

Marital Status	Frequency	%
Single	415	10.6
Long-term Partner	306	7.8
Married	2701	68.8
Separated/Divorced	349	8.9
Widowed	153	3.9

Table 4.5: Marital Status

The present results show a significantly higher rate of marriage than in the general UK population as a whole; 52% of men and 50% of women in 2006 (National Statistics n.d.). The distribution here may reflect the influence of a desire for family values, in what is essentially a family activity (in a forwards or backwards direction). Table 4.6 suggests that male family historians are most likely to be married, whereas non-married genealogists are more likely to be female (chi-squared= 63.178 with 4df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.127). This is supported by the larger proportion of males in the older age groups and the low number of widowed men. The majority of respondents in the younger age brackets are single (as would be expected in normal life).

Marital Status	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Single	140	9.4	275	11.3
Long-term Partner	100	6.7	205	8.5
Married	1128	75.6	1567	64.6
Separated/Divorced	93	6.2	256	10.6
Widowed	31	2.1	122	5.0

Table 4.6: Marital Status by Gender

The proportion of single respondents was found to be relatively low in Australia (7.1%) and New Zealand (7.3%), and high in the USA (13.9%) (chi-squared=67.061 with 20df, p>0.0005; Cramer's V=0.065). There is a higher incidence of separated/divorced and widowed respondents outside the UK, perhaps reflecting the older age distributions.

One of the strongest motivations for engaging in genealogical research is said to be having the information to pass on to future generations of the family (Lambert 1996; Bishop 2003; Kuglin 2004). Respondents most commonly had 2 children; fitting with the UK national average, 1.8 in 2004 (National Statistics n.d). Distributions for Numbers of children are given in Table 4.7.

Number of Children	Frequency	%
None	898	22.9
1	506	12.9
2	1398	35.6
3	716	18.2
4	260	6.6
5 or more	147	3.7

Table 4.7: Number of Children

Table 4.8 shows the distribution of the number of children by country of residence (chi-squared=126.575 with 25df, p< 0.0005; Cramer's V=0.080). There is a higher incidence of no children from the UK respondents, almost 25%, which perhaps reflects the younger age distribution. USA and New Zealand have the highest numbers, perhaps attributed to the slightly older population distributions in these countries; only 7.9% of UK respondents have more than 3 children, compared to 16.7% from both USA and New Zealand.

Number of Children		Country of Residence					
		UK	USA	Canada	Australia	NZ	Other
None	*Freq.*	579	136	71	68	18	25
	%	24.7%	22.9%	18.1%	17.3%	18.8%	26.3%
1	*Freq.*	318	78	54	38	4	11
	%	13.6%	13.1%	13.7%	9.7%	4.2%	11.6%
2	*Freq.*	868	164	149	143	39	30
	%	37.1%	27.6%	37.9%	36.5%	40.6%	31.6%
3	*Freq.*	391	118	85	83	19	19
	%	16.7%	19.8%	21.6%	21.2%	19.8%	20.0%
4	*Freq.*	132	45	26	38	11	7
	%	5.6%	7.6%	6.6%	9.7%	11.5%	7.4%
5 or more	*Freq.*	53	54	8	22	5	3
	%	2.3%	9.1%	2.0%	5.6%	5.2%	3.2%

Table 4.8: Number of Children by Country of Residence

From Figure 4.3, it appears that female genealogists are slightly less likely to have children (chi-squared=13.727 with 5df, p=0.017. Cramer's V=0.059), however the statistics suggest this is coincidental. It may be that women without children would have more time to pursue research, although the connection may also stem from the higher proportion of married men responding.
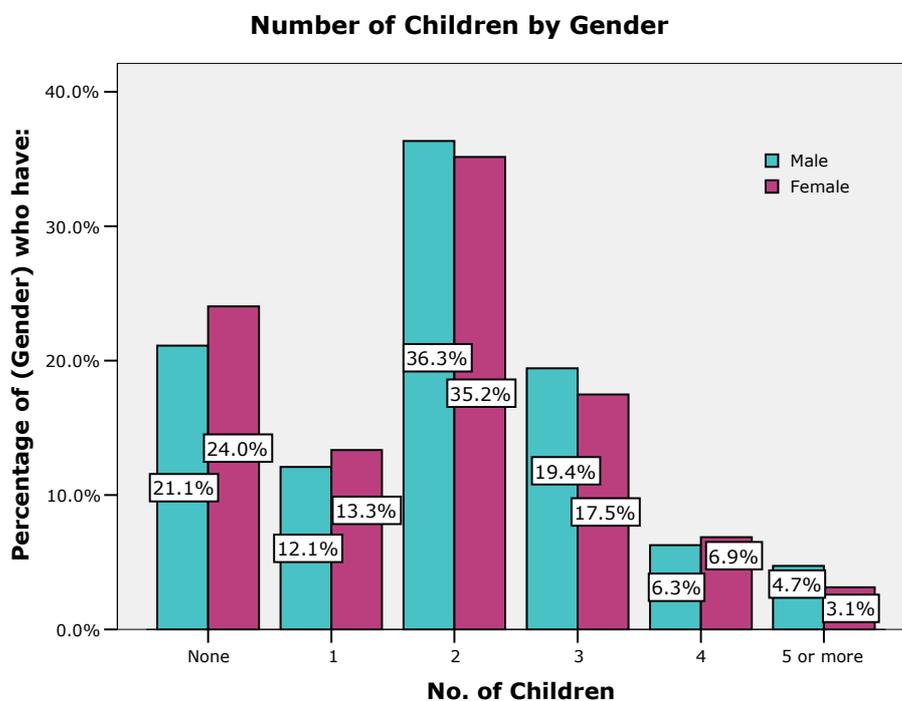
Figure 4.3: Number of Children by Gender

Table 4.9 shows the distributions of respondents with various numbers of grandchildren.

Number of Grandchildren	Frequency	%
None	2485	63.5
1-3	822	21.0
4-6	402	10.3
7-9	119	3.0
10 or more	87	2.2

Table 4.9: Number of Grandchildren

Mirroring "numbers of children" (Table 4.7), the incidence of respondents with no grandchildren is very much higher in the UK and Other countries than elsewhere (chi-squared=109.526 with 20 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.084). This could also be partially attributed to the younger population distribution in UK; however, USA, also with a younger population distribution, had one of the highest numbers of grandchildren. As would be expected, number of grandchildren increases with age (chi-squared=1199.424 with 28 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.278). Again similarly to "numbers of children", males were found to be slightly more dominant when respondents were distributed by gender (chi-squared=3.529 with 4 df, p=0.473; Cramer's V=0.030), however with decreasing significance and reliability of any relationship between the factors. In this case the proportions of men and women were more evenly matched. Cases where respondents had no children (and consequently no grandchildren) were removed from the analysis. A total of 3002 cases remained, which were distributed as follows (Table 4.10), which reveals over half the respondents with at least one child had no grandchildren.

Number of Grandchildren	Frequency	%
None	1599	53.3
1-3	809	26.9
4-6	396	13.2
7-9	115	3.8
10 or more	83	2.8

Table 4.10: Number of Grandchildren (Respondents with Children)

Respondents from USA tended to have the greatest number (chi-squared=97.008 with 20df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.090), with men and women were distributed remarkably evenly here. The highest level of education completed by respondents is illustrated in Figure 4.4.

Highest Education Level Completed
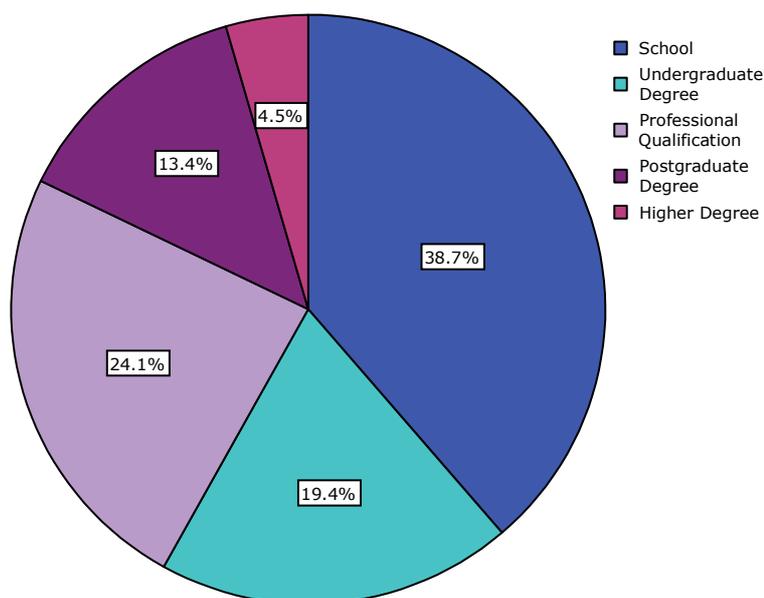
Figure 4.4: Highest Level of Education Completed

It is perhaps unwise to begin to draw comparisons between locations here, as large variations regarding professional qualifications does suggest possible ambiguity around its definition, and/or differences in higher education structures outside the UK. In this country, professional qualifications are generally at postgraduate level, accredited by appropriate professional bodies, and are necessary in order to practice (or practice at a higher level) in professions such as medicine, law, teaching or information management (prospects.ac.uk n.d.; hero.ac.uk n.d.). Although attempts were made to standardise terms, the results suggest that ambiguity was not eliminated.

Gender		School	Undergraduate Degree	Professional Qualification	Postgraduate Degree	Higher Degree
		Education				
Male	*Freq.*	530	278	374	213	84
	%	35.8%	18.8%	25.3%	14.4%	5.7%
Female	*Freq.*	974	476	565	307	90
	%	40.4%	19.7%	23.4%	12.7%	3.7%

Table 4.11: Highest Level of Education Completed by Gender

As illustrated in Table 4.11, there is a greater proportion of women to men in the school and undergraduate degree categories, which reverses elsewhere (chi-squared=16.340 with 4df, p=0.003. Cramer's V=0.065). As might be expected from the age distribution of respondents, the majority were either in full-time employment or retired. This is illustrated in Figure 4.5.
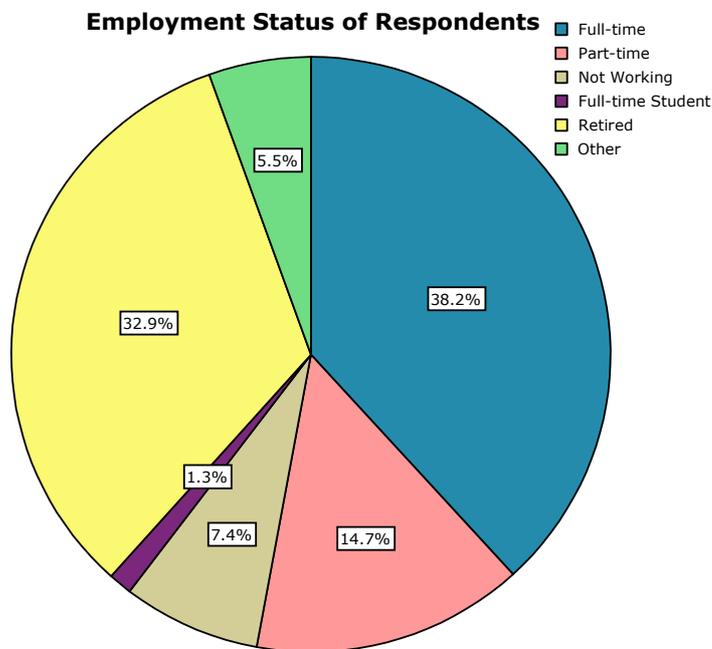
Figure 4.5: Employment Status of Respondents

For the most part, distributions were consistent across countries of residence (chi-squared=103.396 with 25df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.074). USA and 'other countries' had the highest proportions of full-time workers, balanced in both cases by lower numbers in part-time employment. Canada had by far the greatest proportion of retired respondents; consistent with a higher proportion of older people (Table 4.4).

Employment Status	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Full-time	702	47.1	795	32.8
Part-time	84	5.6	489	20.2
Not Working	47	3.2	245	10.1
FT Student	10	0.7	39	1.6
Retired	596	39.9	692	28.6
Other	53	3.6	163	6.7

Table 4.12: Employment Status of Respondents by Gender

The differences shown in Table 4.12 reflect general employment patterns of men and women (chi-squared=302.334 with 5df, p<0.0005. Cramer's V=0.278). Many women work part-time or not at all because of childcare and other responsibilities (National Statistics n.d.). The higher proportion of retired men is consistent with the greater number of males in the older age brackets (Table 4.3). Respondents were asked about any religious affiliations they had towards a number of faith groups, shown in Table 4.13.

Connection With	Frequency	%
None	1517	38.7
Baptist	111	2.8
Church in Wales	30	0.8
Church of England	761	19.4
Church of Ireland	22	0.6
Church of Scotland	321	8.2
Episcopal	83	2.1
Hinduism	9	0.2
Islam	6	0.2
Judaism	15	0.4
Methodist	122	3.1
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)	14	0.4
Roman Catholic	348	8.9
Salvation Army	16	0.4
Sikhism	3	0.1
Other Christian	282	7.2
Other	137	3.5
Prefer not to say	122	3.1

Table 4.13: Religious Connections of Respondents

Several comments were made by respondents regarding the omission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS, Mormons) from this list, in view of its involvement with genealogical research (Christian 2009, Little 2008, 1.2, 5.3.2, 5.8.2). The list of religious groups was based on prevalence in the UK. Respondents connected with the LDS could select the Other Christian category, which attracted 7.2% of the total responses. These were primarily from outside the United Kingdom; 18.9% of US and 12.7% of Canadian respondents, contrasting with 3.5% in UK. Despite the connection of the LDS to genealogy, and theories of religious motivation for researchers (Lambert 1996), there was a high incidence of respondents with no religious associations. This was highest with Australian (48.0%) and UK respondents (42.0%), and lowest (23.3%) for USA (chi-squared=892.834 with 85df, p>0.0005; Cramer's V=0.214). Within general populations, this compares to 15.5 % (UK) (27.5% in Scotland (National Statistics n.d.)), 15.3% (Australia) and 10% (USA) (CIA 2008), which in all

cases is much higher than expected. Men (42.5%) were more likely than women (36.4%) not to have a religious connection. This is consistent with data from the British Social Attitudes Survey (National Centre for Social Research 2006); however the rate of no religious connection is much higher here.

4.4   Location-Specific Data

The distribution of respondents within the UK is compared with the population distribution in Table 4.14.

UK Country	Questionnaire Frequency	%	Population (2001 census)	%
England	1594	70.2	49,138,831	83.6
Scotland	571	25.1	5,062,011	8.6
Wales	86	3.8	2,903,085	4.9
Northern Ireland	17	0.7	1,685,267	2.9
Channel Islands/Isle of Man	4	0.2		

Table 4.14: Location of UK-based Respondents, by Country, and corresponding UK population data

Comparison with 2001 Census data (National Statistics n.d.) shows that England, despite having largest share, is relatively under-represented; Scotland, on the other hand, is relatively over-represented. Respondents were distributed within postcode areas (Appendix 14) illustrated in Figure 4.6 overleaf (key follows diagram on next page (Table 4.15)). It is acknowledged that this may not be an ideal method by which to illustrate respondent distribution throughout the nation, given that there are not equal numbers of addresses or residents within each area[118], and that no account is taken of differences between rural and urban regions, or between business and residential addresses. However, the method was still felt to provide meaningful information on distribution and data availability. Scotland is again over-represented, with the heaviest concentrations of respondents residing in the AB (Aberdeen), E (Edinburgh), and G (Glasgow) postcode areas.

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[118] Allies Computing (2008), suppliers of Royal Mail Postcode Data, explain that there are approximately 3000 delivery addresses within a Postcode Sector (e.g. AB10 1); however, there are not equal numbers of Sectors per Postcode Area.
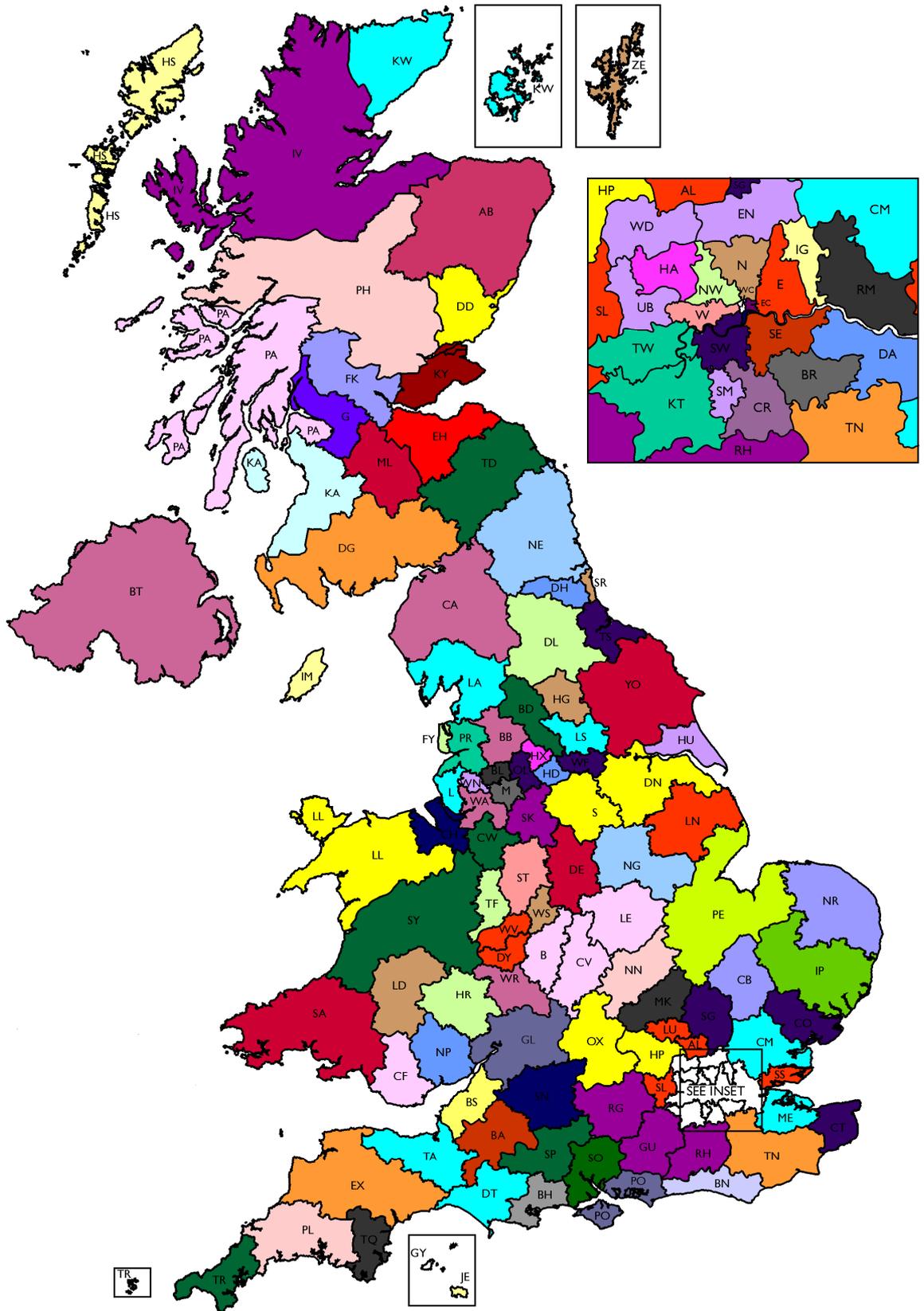
Figure 4.6: Distribution of UK-based Respondents (by Postcode)

Adapted from Geoplan (n.d.)

Freq. (%)		Postcode(s)
133 (5.8)		AB (Aberdeen)
96 (4.2)		EH (Edinburgh)
62 (2.7)		G (Glasgow)
56 (2.5)		SO (Southampton)
49 (2.2)		KA (Kilmarnock)
48 (2.1)		BN (Brighton)
45 (2.0)		BS (Bristol)
41 (1.8)		GL (Gloucester); PO (Portsmouth)
38 (1.7)		IP (Ipswich)
37 (1.6)		NE (Newcastle Upon Tyne); NG (Nottingham)
36 (1.6)		KY (Kirkcaldy)
34 (1.5)		GU (Guilford); IV (Inverness); RG (Reading); RH (Redhill); SK (Stockport)
32 (1.4)		BH (Bournemouth)
28 (1.2)		B (Birmingham); CF (Cardiff); CV (Coventry); LE (Leicester); PA (Paisley)
26 (1.1)		PE (Peterborough)
25 (1.1)		CB (Cambridge); FK (Falkirk); NR (Norwich)
24 (1.1)		DG (Dumfries); EX (Exeter); TN (Tonbridge)
22 (1.0)		CH (Chester); SN (Norwich)
21 (0.9)		BA (Bath); SE (London)
20 (0.9)		DD (Dundee); DN (Doncaster); HP (Hemel Hempstead); LL (Llandudno); OX (Oxford); S (Sheffield)
19 (0.8)		NN (Northampton); PH (Perth); PL (Plymouth)
18 (0.8)		BR (Bromley); M (Manchester)
17 (0.7)		BB (Blackburn); BT (Belfast); CA (Carlisle); WA (Warrington); WR (Worcester)
16 (0.7)		KT (Kingston Upon Thames); PR (Preston); TW (Twickenham)
15 (0.7)		DE (Derby); ML (Motherwell); SA (Swansea); YO (York)
14 (0.6)		CM (Chelmsford); DT (Dorchester); KW (Kirkwall); L (Liverpool); LA (Lancaster); LS (Leeds); ME (Medway); TA (Taunton))
13 (0.6)		CO (Colchester); CT (Canterbury); OL (Oldham); SG (Stevenage); SW (London); TS (Cleveland); WF (Wakefield)
12 (0.5)		BL (Bolton); MK (Milton Keynes); RM (Romford); TQ (Torquay)
11 (0.5)		BD (Bradford); CW (Crewe); SP (Salisbury); SY (Shrewsbury); TD (Galashiels); TR (Truro)
10 (0.4)		ST (Stoke-on-Trent); W (London)
9 (0.4)		DA (Dartford); DH (Durham); HD (Huddersfield); NP (Newport)
8 (0.4)		AL (St. Albans); DY (Dudley); E (London); LN (Lincoln); LU (Luton); SL (Slough); SS (Southend-on-Sea); WV (Wolverhampton)
7 (0.3)		DL (Darlington); FY (Blackpool); HR (Hereford); NW (London); TF (Telford)
6 (0.3)		EN (Enfield); HU (Hull); SM (Sutton); UB (Uxbridge); WD (Watford); WN (Wigan)
5 (0.2)		CR (Croydon)
4 (0.2)		HA (Harrow); HX (Halifax)
3 (0.1)		HG (Harrogate); LD (Llandridod Wells); N (London); SR (Sunderland); WS (Walsall); ZE (Shetland)
2 (0.1)		HS (Outer Hebrides); IG (Ilford); IM (Isle of Man); JE (Jersey)
1 (0.0)		EC (London)

Table 4.15: Key to Figure 4.6 (Distribution of UK-based Respondents (by Postcode))

Of those respondents not currently living in the UK, the majority (66.1%) had not previously done so, as illustrated in Figure 4.7. Again, relative to their respective home populations, many more ex-patriot Scots (181) responded than English (354).

Have you previously lived in the UK?
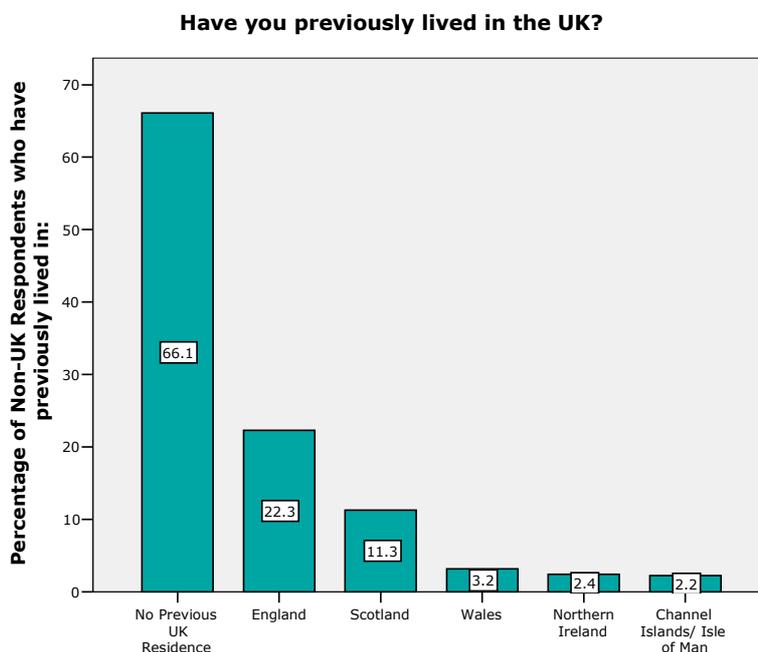
Figure 4.7: Previous UK Residence (Internationally-based Respondents)

4.5   Genealogical Experience

The vast majority of respondents (81.9%) had been involved with genealogical research for at least a year, with the greatest number in the 1-4 years category (Figure 4.8).

Experience of Family History Research
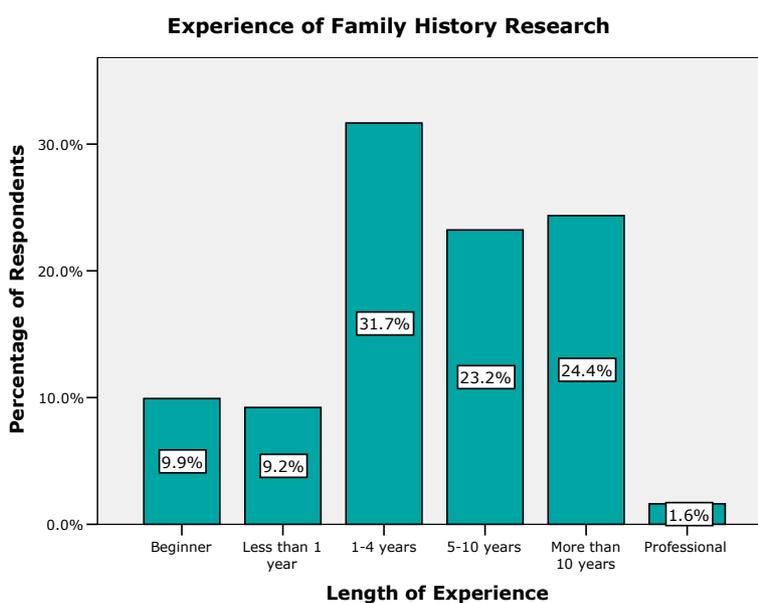
Figure 4.8: Length of Experience of Family History Research

Recent growth in the popularity of genealogy is evident here, with over half the respondents beginning their research within the previous 5 years. All countries exhibited a similar distribution, with respondents concentrated at the high experience end (chi-squared=143.537 with 45df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.086). Scotland, Wales and the USA have the highest rates of beginners. With these large numbers of "new" researchers it is important not to forget the significant proportion (46.7%) of highly experienced respondents who had been practising genealogy for over 5 years; the USA also exhibited high numbers here, in addition to a high rate of beginners.

Length of Genealogical Experience	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Beginner	187	12.5	203	8.3
Less than 1 year	140	9.3	221	9.1
1-4 years	446	29.7	801	32.9
5-10 years	319	21.3	595	24.4
More than 10 years	385	25.6	575	23.6
Professional	24	1.6	39	1.6

Table 4.16: Length of Genealogical Experience by Gender

As is indicated in Table 4.16, female genealogists were generally the more experienced, and concentrated in the middle of the range (chi-squared=24.577 with 5df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.079). There were more male beginners, but also a higher proportion of males with more than 10 years experience: is this linked to the higher proportion of older men? Logically, the length of genealogical experience would seem to increase as the respondents' age increases (chi-squared=394.026 with 35df, p<0.0005. Cramer's V=0.142). Marital status does not seem to be connected to genealogical experience (chi-squared=73.906 with 20 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.069), although respondents who were single or had a long-term partner contained a higher proportion of beginners. The greatest number of professionals was also amongst single respondents. Respondents with 1 child or less were most likely to be newcomers to family history and have under a year's experience of research (chi-squared=63.620 with 25df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.057); however, this may also relate to age.

Just over half (50.9%) of respondents were members of a genealogical or family history society, although membership rates varied considerably with the length of time respondents had been researching (Table 4.17).

| Length of Genealogical Experience | Member of Genealogical/ Family History Society? | | | |
| | Yes | | No | |
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Beginner	29	7.4%	361	92.6%
Less than 1 year	73	20.2%	288	79.8%
1-4 years	563	46.4%	651	53.6%
5-10 years	571	64.5%	314	35.5%
More than 10 years	687	72.3%	263	27.7%
Professional	44	69.8%	19	30.2%

Table 4.17: Membership of Genealogical Society by Length of Genealogical Experience

Only 7.4% of beginner genealogists were members, and 20.2% of those who had been researching less than one year. Membership increased with genealogical experience, to 72.3% of those researching more than 10 years and 69.8% of professionals. The statistical association between these factors was strong and highly significant (chi-squared=689.770 with 5df, $p<0.0005$; Cramer's V=0.423), suggesting that family history societies are something that family historians come to later in their research. Public library membership is much higher at 78.2%, comparing favourably with an approximate 58% membership rate in the general UK population (LISU 2006).

| Country of Residence | Member of Public Library | | | |
| | Yes | | No | |
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
United Kingdom	1843	79.3%	482	20.7%
United States of America	444	75.5%	144	24.5%
Canada	300	76.7%	91	23.3%
Australia	314	80.9%	74	19.1%
New Zealand	88	92.6%	7	7.4%
Other	44	46.8%	50	53.2%

Table 4.18: Membership of Public Library by Country of Residence

There is a marked difference in public library membership between the 5 main countries and 'others' (Table 4.18), where only 46.8% are members (chi-squared=72.062 with 5 df, $p<0.0005$; Cramer's V=0.136); this is likely explained by differences in public library provision and

visibility in these countries. Table 4.19 illustrates the distribution of membership rates by genealogical experience.

Length of Genealogical Experience		Member of Public Library?	
		Yes	No
Beginner	Freq.	250	136
	%	64.8%	35.2%
Less than 1 year	Freq.	263	93
	%	73.9%	26.1%
1-4 years	Freq.	969	273
	%	78.0%	22.0%
5-10 years	Freq.	727	170
	%	81.0%	19.0%
More than 10 years	Freq.	779	171
	%	82.0%	18.0%
Professional	Freq.	55	7
	%	88.7%	11.3%

Table 4.19: Membership of Public Library by Length of Genealogical Experience

As can be seen, the frequency of public library membership increases with length of family history research experience (chi-squared= 61.046 with 5df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.125). Members of a FHS were also slightly more likely to be members of a library; 82.8% of FHS members were members of their local library compared to 73.3% of non members (chi-squared=49.851 with 1df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.114). Women (82.4%) were more likely to be members than men (71.3%) (chi-squared=65.446 with 5 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.130). This is echoed with slightly higher library usage by women (58%) than men amongst the general population (LISU 2006). The lowest level of library membership was found in the 25-34 age group at 73.2%. From that point the membership rate increases steadily as age increases (chi-squared=61.046 with 5 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.125). Researchers under 25 had amongst the highest rates of public library membership.

Figure 4.9 illustrates the countries of the UK in which the population were researching ancestors. Respondents were not limited to one answer.

Countries in which Respondents are Researching Ancestors
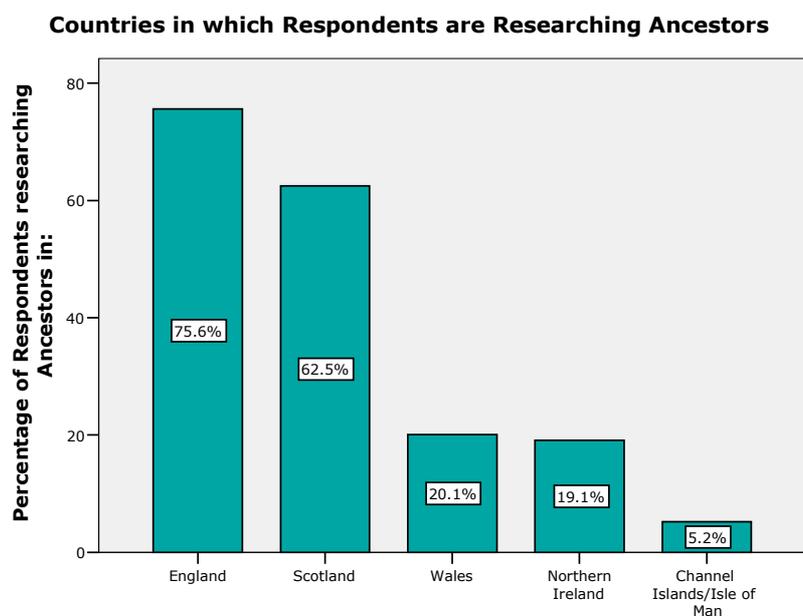
Figure 4.9: Countries of UK in which Respondents are researching Ancestors

Again, there is a very high incidence of respondents researching ancestors in Scotland compared to the proportions of populations (4.4, 4.5), although again likely attributed to the Scottish origins of the research. There were also a high percentage of family historians researching in Northern Ireland; it should be noted here that due to political changes which have taken place in Ireland, these figure will include ancestors from both Northern Ireland and Eire. Table 4.20 distributes respondents' research interests by their country of residence. The highest rates of interest occurred within the particular region itself. Aside from this, English ancestors were most common amongst those in New Zealand (86.5%) and Australia (82.4%), and Scottish ancestors with those from the USA (82.7%) and Canada (80.3%).

Country of Residence	Respondent is Researching Ancestors in									
	CI/IoM		England		NI		Scotland		Wales	
	Freq.	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*	*Freq.*	*%*
England	92	5.8	*1467*	*92.4*	179	11.3	654	41.2	389	24.5
Scotland	14	2.5	275	49.1	123	22.0	*526*	*93.9*	46	8.2
Wales	4	4.7	76	88.4	6	7.0	26	30.2	*57*	*66.3*
NI	1	6.7	10	66.7	*13*	*86.7*	9	60.0	3	20.0
CI/IoM	*2*	*50.0*	2	50.0	1	25.0	2	50.0	1	25.0
USA	14	2.4	309	53.6	174	30.2	477	82.7	95	16.5
Canada	24	6.2	288	73.8	103	26.4	313	80.3	68	17.4
Australia	34	8.7	324	82.4	105	26.7	279	71.0	75	19.1
New Zealand	10	10.4	83	86.5	20	20.8	77	80.2	24	25.0
Other	8	8.8	74	81.3	11	12.1	56	61.5	16	17.6

Table 4.20: Countries of Research by Country of Residence

Those results emphasised in the table above show the proportion of respondents living in a UK country also researching there: all relationships are statistically significant, with strong associations for Scotland and England (Table 4.21).

	Chi-squared	Df	p	Cramer's V
England	672.209	9	<0.0005	0.418
Scotland	715.967	9	<0.0005	0.431
Wales	194.695	9	<0.0005	0.225
Northern Ireland	178.538	9	<0.0005	0.215
CI/IoM	52.139	9	<0.0005	0.116

Table 4.21: Statistical Test Values for Country of Residence by (individual) Country of Research

For international respondents with previous UK residence, there does appear to be a connection between their residence in a country and researching there. Ancestors in England and Scotland were most popular amongst those who have never lived in the UK; consistent with rates of interest in the countries from all those based internationally.

4.6   Technological Experience

The user population generally had a great deal of computer experience, with 3387 (85.9%) having 5 or more years use. This is shown in Table 4.22.

Length of Experience of Computer Use	Frequency	%
Less than 6 months	16	0.4
6 months - 1 year	36	0.9
1 - 3 years	157	4.0
3 - 5 years	345	8.8
More than 5 years	3387	85.9

Table 4.22: Length of Computer Experience

A comment was received from a female participant regarding the lengths of time selected for this particular question, which did not allow her to reflect her own extensive experience of over twenty years. Whilst this is true, in gauging levels of experience there comes a point at which additional experience offers little advantage, and 5 years was judged to be a suitable cut-off point for this purpose. Male respondents had slightly more computing experience; 88.2% had been using computers for over 5 years, compared with 84.5% of women, although

the ratio of men to women was found to be very similar until the 3-5 year category. Generally, UK respondents have less experience than others (chi-squared=25.871 with 10df, p=0.004; Cramer's V=0.058), although this could be affected by their higher response rate.

Respondents estimated their computer skill level as follows: 205 (5.3%) as novice, 2115 (54.3%) as intermediate, and 1574 (40.4%) as advanced. It should be noted that as these are self-ratings, they will be highly subjective and may not accurately reflect (in either direction) the true level of a respondent's computer skills. It would appear from Figure 4.10 that men are more confident in their own computer skills (chi-squared=50.315 with 2 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.114).
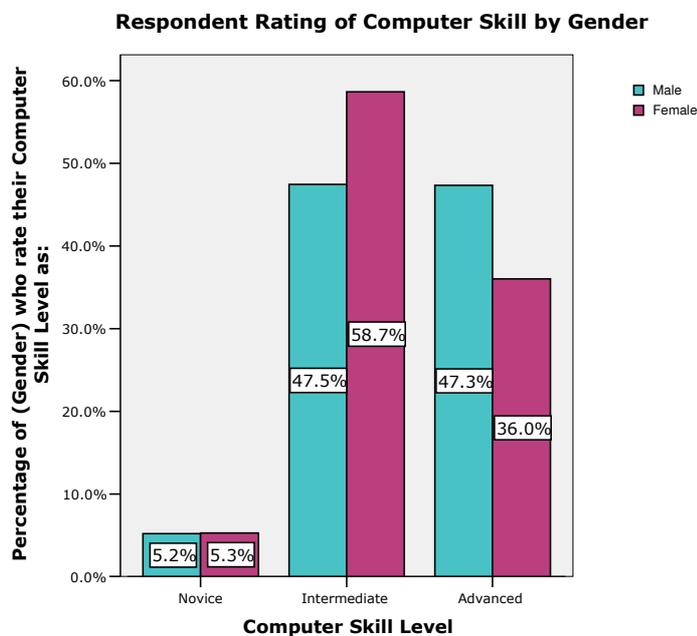
Figure 4.10: Respondent Assessment of Computer Skill Level by Gender

Countries with highest ratings of computer skill level were not the same as the countries with greatest experience in terms of longevity. In particular, Canada and New Zealand, who had the greatest proportions of users with more than 5 years experience, had the lowest rates of users rating themselves as advanced (chi-squared=25.871 with 10 df, p=0.004; Cramer's V=0.058). As Table 4.29 indicates, a respondent's skill level rating tends to increase as the length of computer experience increases. There is a highly significant and strong association between these two factors (chi-squared=1517.297 with 8df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.422).

Length of Computer Experience		Computer Skill Level Assessment		
		Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Less than 6 months	Freq.	16	0	0
	%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
6 months - 1 year	Freq.	28	7	0
	%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%
1 - 3 years	Freq.	67	81	2
	%	44.7%	54.0%	1.3%
3 - 5 years	Freq.	49	267	16
	%	14.8%	80.4%	4.8%
More than 5 years	Freq.	44	1760	1552
	%	1.3%	52.4%	46.2%

Table 4.23: Respondent Assessment of Computer Skill Level by Length of Computer Experience

Identical questions were asked regarding experience of Internet use. Again, as shown in Table 4.23, most respondents fell into the upper range of categories, but slightly more evenly distributed. Along with the computer experience responding family historians have, this illustrates the penetration that computing and the Internet now has into our daily lives.

Length of Experience	Frequency	%
Less than 6 months	27	0.7
6 months - 1 year	53	1.4
1 - 3 years	309	7.9
3 - 5 years	847	21.6
More than 5 years	2677	68.4

Table 4.24: Length of Internet Experience

Generally, respondents had not been using the Internet as long as they had computers. Little difference was found between men and women until the top experience level; 73.4% of men and 65.3% of women had been using the Internet for more than 5 years (chi-squared =33.251 with 4df, p>0.0005; Cramer's V=0.092). Again we find that the UK respondents were the least experienced (chi-squared=101.885 with 20df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.081). Assessments of Internet skill levels were extremely similar to that of those of computer skill levels; 210 respondents (5.5%) rated themselves as novice, 1988 (51.6%) as intermediate, and 1655 (43.0%) as advanced. Respondents were slightly more confident in their ability here than they were with using computers in general. The differences between male and female respondents shown in Figure 4.11 similarly mirror those for computer skill level (Figure 4.10). In keeping with the slightly raised level of confidence in Internet ability, the proportion

of women in the advanced category is slightly higher (chi-squared=27.208 with 2df, p>0.0005; Cramer's V=0.084).
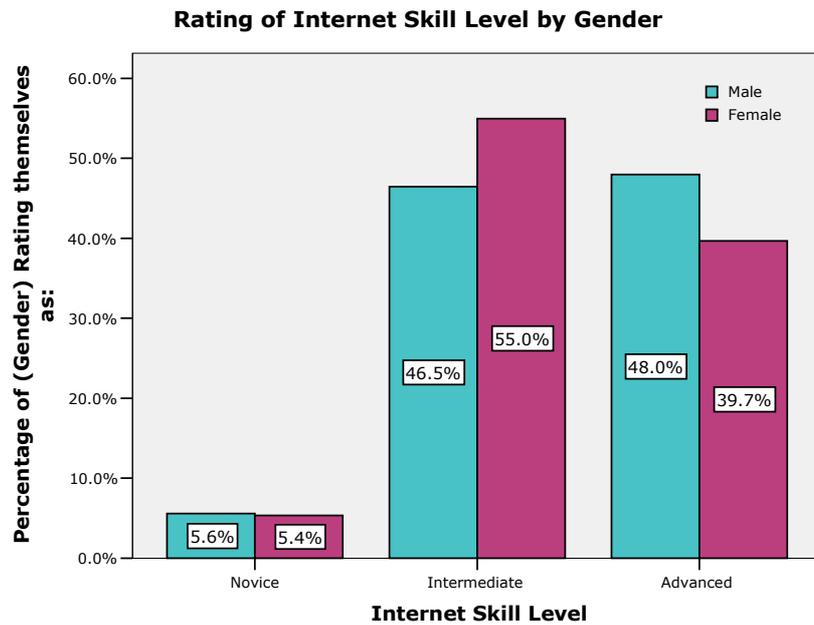
Figure 4.11: Respondent Assessment of Internet Skill Level by Gender

Table 4.25 shows a strongly significant connection, similar to that between computer experience and skill level (chi-squared=1475.822 with 8df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.439). Comparing this with Table 4.23 illustrates that, in addition to greater confidence using the Internet compared to computers generally, respondents felt more confident more quickly. Again it must be noted that the variable accuracy these self-assessments are of limited reliability due to their inherent lack of objectivity.

Length of Internet Experience		*Internet Skill Rating*		
		Novice	*Intermediate*	*Advanced*
Less than 6 months	*Freq.*	23	4	0
	%	85.2%	14.8%	0.0%
6 months – 1 year	*Freq.*	34	17	1
	%	65.4%	32.7%	1.9%
1 - 3 years	*Freq.*	72	211	15
	%	24.2%	70.8%	5.0%
3 - 5 years	*Freq.*	59	613	147
	%	7.2%	74.8%	17.9%
More than 5 years	*Freq.*	20	1128	1477
	%	0.8%	43.0%	56.3%

Table 4.25: Respondent Assessment of Internet Skill Level by Length of Internet Experience

As would also be expected, Internet experience increases with computer experience, with the connection between the two factors highly significant and extremely strong (chi-squared=6426.164 with 16 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.641).

4.7   *Use of e-Genealogical Resources*

Respondents confirmed their current use of UK e-genealogical resources in their research by completing the survey. Table 4.26 explores the length of their use.

Length of Use of e-Genealogical Resources	*Frequency*	*%*
Less than 6 months	413	10.5
6 months - 1 year	356	9.1
1- 3 years	952	24.2
More than 3 years	2206	56.2

Table 4.26: Length of Use of e-Genealogical Resources

When the data collection instrument was designed, 3 years was considered to be satisfactory as the maximum time period, despite the existence of e-family history resources for more than 3 years before this (1.3). However, since more than half the responding user community reported having used electronic resources for over 3 years, on reflection it would have been meaningful to have a longer time period. Age did not appear to be significantly related to a user's length of experience with e-genealogical resources, although as with experience of genealogical research (4.6), length of use does increase with age (chi-squared=273.986 with 21 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.153). There does not appear to be any significant difference in the length of time males and females have been using the resources (chi-squared=20.509 with 3 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.072).

Country of Residence		Length of Use of e-Genealogical Resources			
		Less than 6 months	6 months - 1 year	1 - 3 years	More than 3 years
England	*Freq.*	135	138	473	843
	%	8.5%	8.7%	29.8%	53.1%
Scotland	*Freq.*	86	65	134	279
	%	15.2%	11.5%	23.8%	49.5%
Wales	*Freq.*	10	11	21	43
	%	11.8%	12.9%	24.7%	50.6%
Northern Ireland	*Freq.*	0	0	5	12
	%	0.0%	0.0%	29.4%	70.6%
CI/IoM	*Freq.*	0	0	2	2
	%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
United States of America	*Freq.*	83	55	100	356
	%	14.0%	9.3%	16.8%	59.9%
Canada	*Freq.*	34	23	72	265
	%	8.6%	5.8%	18.3%	67.3%
Australia	*Freq.*	34	37	86	239
	%	8.6%	9.3%	21.7%	60.4%
New Zealand	*Freq.*	4	8	19	66
	%	4.1%	8.2%	19.6%	68.0%
Other	*Freq.*	18	9	18	49
	%	19.1%	9.6%	19.1%	52.1%

Table 4.27: Length of Use of e-Genealogical Resources by Country of Residence

Immediately noticeable from Table 4.27 are the differences in the lengths of use of genealogical websites between the UK and elsewhere, with more researchers outside the UK using the e-resources for longer (chi-squared=118.327 with 27 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.101). The rate of respondents who have used the resources for under one year corresponds with the proportion of relatively inexperienced genealogists. Table 4.28 compares length of use of e-genealogical resources with genealogical experience.

Length of Genealogical Experience		Length of Use of e-Genealogical Resources			
		Less than 6 months	6 months - 1 year	1- 3 years	More than 3 years
Beginner	Freq.	299	54	21	16
	%	76.7%	13.8%	5.4%	4.1%
Less than 1 year	Freq.	83	236	35	8
	%	22.9%	65.2%	9.7%	2.2%
1-4 years	Freq.	15	47	692	491
	%	1.2%	3.8%	55.6%	39.4%
5-10 years	Freq.	6	11	92	802
	%	0.7%	1.2%	10.1%	88.0%
More than 10 years	Freq.	8	8	106	830
	%	0.8%	0.8%	11.1%	87.2%
Professional	Freq.	2	0	5	56
	%	3.2%	0.0%	7.9%	88.9%

Table 4.28: Length of Use of e-Genealogical Resources by Length of Genealogical Experience

As would be expected, resource use increases as genealogical experience increases, with a highly significant and strong connection between the two factors (chi-squared= 4912.906 with 15 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.646). Table 4.29 demonstrates a similar association between length of Internet experience and e-genealogical resource use. This is not as strong, but is nevertheless highly significant (chi-squared=795.120 with 12 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.261).

Length of Internet Experience		Length of Use of e-Genealogical Resources			
		Less than 6 months	6 months - 1 year	1- 3 years	More than 3 years
Less than 6 months	Freq.	23	3	1	0
	%	85.2%	11.1%	3.7%	0.0%
6 months - 1 year	Freq.	21	24	7	1
	%	39.6%	45.3%	13.2%	1.9%
1 - 3 years	Freq.	59	55	180	14
	%	19.2%	17.9%	58.4%	4.5%
3 - 5 years	Freq.	87	68	274	411
	%	10.4%	8.1%	32.6%	48.9%
More than 5 years	Freq.	218	205	484	1760
	%	8.2%	7.7%	18.1%	66.0%

Table 4.29: Length of Use of e-Genealogical Resources by Length of Internet Experience

Public library membership, as was the case with length of genealogical experience (Table 4.19), increases as the length of resource use increases (chi-squared=32.917 with 3 df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.092). Those using genealogical websites for under 6 months had a membership rate of 67.4%, which rose to 79.5% of those who had been using the resources for 3 or more years. This is consistent with the connection between length of genealogical

experience and e-genealogical experience (Table 4.28), and with the idea that libraries and local studies materials demonstrate their value to researchers over time.

4.8   Location of Research Activity

The main location for the respondents' e-genealogical research was the home (3449, 88.7%). Eighty-five (2.2%) researched mainly at work, 292 (7.5%) home and work, 45 (1.2%) library, and 19 (0.5%) other. Research locations were remarkably evenly distributed by country of residence (chi-squared=29.228 with 20 df, p=0.083; Cramer's V=0.043). The highest percentages of home use were found in New Zealand (96.8%) and Canada (90.4%), with the lowest occurring in the USA, but home and work was higher there in compensation. The highest occurrences of libraries as a respondent's main Internet connection were in the UK (1.3%) and USA (1.2%). The speeds of the respondents' main Internet connection varied considerably by country of residence, as illustrated by Table 4.30 (chi-squared=575.191 with 30df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.171).

Speed of Main Internet Connection		*Country of Residence*					
		UK	*USA*	*Canada*	*Australia*	*NZ*	*Other*
Dial-up: less than 56Kbps	*Freq.*	79	27	23	39	10	5
	%	3.4%	4.5%	5.8%	9.8%	10.4%	5.3%
Dial-up: 56Kbps	*Freq.*	216	108	27	65	25	13
	%	9.2%	18.1%	6.8%	16.4%	26.0%	13.7%
Broadband: 512 Kbps	*Freq.*	591	146	75	172	39	29
	%	25.2%	24.4%	18.9%	43.3%	40.6%	30.5%
Broadband: 1Mbps or greater	*Freq.*	1258	200	138	85	16	38
	%	53.7%	33.4%	34.8%	21.4%	16.7%	40.0%
LAN	*Freq.*	61	43	57	10	1	4
	%	2.6%	7.2%	14.4%	2.5%	1.0%	4.2%
Other	*Freq.*	7	31	30	9	0	4
	%	0.3%	5.2%	7.6%	2.3%	0.0%	4.2%
Unsure	*Freq.*	130	43	47	17	5	2
	%	5.6%	7.2%	11.8%	4.3%	5.2%	2.1%

Table 4.30: Speed of Main Internet Connection by Country of Residence

By far the greatest number of respondents (2711, 69.6%) only used their main Internet connection to carry out genealogical research. The popularity of other research venues was varied: 175 (4.5%) used the home of another family member; 285 (7.3%) a family history society's library; 419 (10.8%) researched in a public library; 100 (2.6%) in another type of

library; and 204 (5.2%) in another place. Table 4.31 shows the variations in these research venues by country of residence.

Other Locations Used for e-Genealogical Research		Country of Residence					
		UK	USA	Canada	Australia	NZ	Other
Family member's home	Freq.	105	23	19	16	3	9
	%	4.6%	3.9%	4.8%	4.1%	3.1%	9.6%
FHS library	Freq.	103	64	60	42	11	2
	%	4.5%	10.8%	15.1%	10.6%	11.5%	2.1%
Public library	Freq.	214	98	36	53	13	5
	%	9.3%	16.5%	9.0%	13.4%	13.5%	5.3%
Other library	Freq.	45	24	11	9	6	3
	%	2.0%	4.0%	2.8%	2.3%	6.3%	3.2%
Other	Freq.	138	25	14	17	2	7
	%	6.0%	4.2%	3.5%	4.3%	2.1%	7.4%
I only use my main Internet connection	Freq.	1701	359	258	258	61	68
	%	73.8%	60.5%	64.8%	65.3%	63.5%	72.3%

Table 4.31: Other Locations where Internet is used for Genealogical Research

Respondents using only their main Internet connection for genealogical research are far more prevalent in the UK and the 'other' countries than elsewhere (chi-squared=155.763 with 25df, p<0.0005; Cramer's V=0.090). Another significant point is illustrated by Table 4.32; of researchers whose main connection is at home, 2435 (71.4%) use only this connection, 63% of the total number of respondents (chi-squared=139.785 with 20df, p>0.0005; Cramer's V=0.095).

Other Connection Location		Main Connection Location				
		Home	Work	Home and Work	Library	Other
Family member's home	Freq.	139	11	17	5	1
	%	4.1	13.4	5.9	11.4	5.3
FHS library	Freq.	256	5	12	3	4
	%	7.5	6.1	4.2	6.8	22.1
Public library	Freq.	342	14	37	14	5
	%	10.0	17.1	12.9	31.8	26.3
Other library	Freq.	80	2	11	6	
	%	2.3	2.4	3.8	13.6	
Other	Freq.	156	6	26	7	4
	%	4.6	7.3	9.1	15.9	21.1
I only use my main Internet connection	Freq.	2435	44	184	9	5
	%	71.4	53.7	64.1	20.5	26.3

Table 4.32: Other Research Connection Location by Main Connection Location

4.9   *Chapter Summary*

Genealogy attracts all kinds of people with different degrees of interest and different needs. As Librarians we need to resist the temptation to treat all genealogists as if they were cast from the same mould, and rather treat each of them as individuals. (Sinko and Peters 1983)

What is perhaps most apparent from the results of this survey is that this quotation has never been more true. Users of UK genealogical websites are extremely diverse, and although slightly older than the population at large, they are not all old ladies as previous stereotypes may have suggested. Certainly within the UK, the Internet appears to have encouraged a higher number of younger and male researchers into family history. The users are generally well educated, with a great deal of experience in working with computers, the Internet, and with their own research. Most have used electronic resources for over three years. Length of use is most closely related to genealogical and Internet experience. Forty percent of the surveyed users of e-genealogical resources reside outside the UK, which should be of interest to local studies organisations. Additionally, nearly 90% or respondents mainly accessed genealogical sites from home; 63% exclusively so. The Internet has greatly increased the potential audience of collections that once may have only attracted those in the local area, to the whole country, and indeed the world. e-Genealogists are receptive to (if not already aware of) libraries, and the value that local studies materials can add to their family histories. The question is how best now to proceed in providing and promoting remote access to local studies materials, in order to enhance the genealogical research experience for those who cannot visit collections in person. The next chapter will examine UK family history resources, and user interactions with these.

I am constantly amazed at the amount of information online. Living in Western Canada, there is no way that I could do my research without expensive trips to archives, Family Records Centres, etc, in Ottawa, Canada, and the UK. Even if I could afford to make the trips, I could never spend the time needed to obtain what I am able to obtain online, and more info is added every day! (D16)

...[F]or me it's fantastic, and because it's copies of the actual page you can see all the signatures and you think "oooh, my Great-grandfather's signature!" It just excites me so much! (FA3)

5.1   Introduction

The Internet-facilitated revolutionary development in access to resources has been one of the major drivers behind the continuing rise in popularity of family history. This chapter considers the e-resources in use by family historians (Chapter 4), and their interactions with them. Relevant resources have been constantly examined throughout the study of a fast-moving area which has hugely expanded. Nick Barratt (2006) noted that since the start of *WDYTYA?* in 2003, "genealogy itself has changed beyond all recognition in the intervening period. The Internet has brought record series into our homes, and Family History is the third most popular use of cyberspace". Reid (2003) also noted that it was the Internet's most popular use after pornographic material; this was largely supported by Jansen *et al* (1998).

Literature asserts that a more thorough understanding of e-family history resources would be key to improving the service to local studies service users (1.3, 2.5; Billeter 2001; Webster 2005; Paul 1995; Barber 2007 among others). Librarian respondents (Skinner 2010) highlighted the importance of referrals within their work with genealogical patrons, "as well as the need for expertise in knowing which resources to suggest in which instance". Casteleyn advocates "there needs to be qualitative analysis of information sources in the Internet carried out by an information expert. In other words, much the same job of evaluation that a librarian traditionally did selecting bookstock" (2002a). Sowards (1997) supports *[Saving] the Time of the Surfer: Evaluating Web Sites for Users*. Service users are looking to practitioners for assistance in their use, and practitioners need familiarity with the resources available (LS13, 7.8). To that end, 'Evaluative Criteria for e-Family History Resources' were considered a major output of this PhD research. These were derived from

the process of a review of the relevant literature (3.6, 5.2), and are presented in an extended format in 5.3, alongside application of the criteria to a number of e-family history/genealogical resources. The sites were selected from those utilised by the research participants, and to illustrate a range from the resources available (3.6). The focus then shifts to user interactions with these e-resources, exploring participants' attitudes and experiences with these during their research. Echoing warnings in the literature from both family historians and information professionals, many participants displayed awareness of the dangers and limitations of researching online, and the possible incompleteness of digitised information and indexes. D28 warned "what you lose with search engines is the ability to take a parish record that you know contains family information and just delve through. The chance connections or relatives to be traced back are lost". Similarly FB3 identified the risk "that you don't then go and look at stuff that is not on [*ScotlandsPeople*], because you get so much from it". This information is drawn largely from the focus groups (F), and supplemented with comments and information supplied by participants from the diary (D) and search shadowing studies (S) where appropriate.

5.2   *Literature Review of Criteria*

This section presents a critical review of the literature underpinning the creation of the evaluative criteria. This encompasses criteria for all subjects and audiences (ALA n.d.), focusing on information, website and genealogy/family history subject knowledge, from information and genealogical (both academic and mass-market) literature. The nature of e-resources was also considered. A major contrast appearing between traditional and electronic resources is the improved ability of the latter to collect together many different information "types" into one resource. "Many of them are not what you would call 'neatly contained' at all... massively sprawling, all-things-to-all-men, gallimaufries of information" (Good Web Guide n.d.). As a result, no categorisation scheme was evident with electronic resources, and genealogical guides such as Herber (2005), Christian (2009), and *Cyndi's List* were consulted, alongside consideration of genealogical facts (1.6). Taking these into account, categorising resources by their provider, i.e. the organisation, body, or person making them available, seemed to allow the most meaningful comparisons.

Katz (2001)'s *Introduction to Reference Work* is a fundamental and extensive text regarding reference source evaluation. His main criteria for assessing the quality of an information source include the purpose; authority (objectivity, fairness); scope (coverage and currency); intended audience; cost; and format (arrangement, usability, indexing). Now moving more toward digital reference sources, he notes that increased capacity for electronic storage and publishing can increase both information overload and more "junk" information, and considers that librarians would benefit from being over-cautious in their evaluations. Despite electronic sources being grouped together, their form (or original form) still indicates their likely appropriateness for an enquiry. Duplication and crossover of data with other products must be considered, alongside the "depth of indexing" (or granularity of data) and which fields are searchable. Although Katz suggests that this is largely countered by facilities for full-text searching, fields are still important with census/BMD records, where users search on specific details only. Sowards (1997) asserts that a resource with a clear purpose is more likely to find an audience, and remain accessible for a longer period of time. Also to be considered are identification of validity and relevance, authority, layout and design, links, and content. Cooke's guide to *How to evaluate information on the Internet* (2001) was identified as a model for the criteria, where, in addition to non-specific considerations, different lists are utilised depending on the exact components and nature of the resource. Elements considered in this instance included: determining the purpose, coverage, authority and reputation, accuracy, currency and maintenance, accessibility, presentation and arrangement, and ease of use. Within their resource evaluations, the Good Web Guide (n.d.) considers the readability, content, navigation, speed, updating, and regional coverage of the resource; whether registration and/or subscription are required; and the presence of secure ordering facilities.

Edwards (1998) suggests three main aspects of evaluation: access, quality, and ease of use. Access is cited as most important, as users need to get to the resource before they can use or evaluate it. Quality is next, as "users may be prepared to struggle with a less-than-perfect interface if the content is really worthwhile". McLean Clunies (2004) advocates using "common sense criteria" in looking at websites, but also suggests that "major websites with good quality content tend to live longer". Tillman (2003) differentiates ease of use into convenience, organisation, and the speed of connection to the resource. High importance is given to the stability of the information; whether it can be relied on in longevity terms, and

also to the fact that information is locatable in the first instance. Christian (2009) also discusses the problem with longevity, with the location of most Internet resources "in a constant state of flux". He highlights three ways to present a primary source online: a digital image, a transcription, or indexes (the majority of online content); noting that having all three (e.g. *Old Bailey Online*) is very rare. There is "no guarantee of reliability" from compiled sources such as pedigree databases, especially material submitted by individual genealogists. In addition to a possible US bias, these can exhibit fundamental errors, although "the vast majority of major projects" contain transcription errors. Smith (1997) noted that workability is where Internet criteria diverge most from those for print resources; resources should be easy and intuitive to browse as well as search. The resource provider should "appear to have a commitment to [its] ongoing maintenance and stability"; and users should check what information the source actually does provide, or whether it provides leads or a jumping off point to information elsewhere. Thomas *et al* (2007) encourage the reader to "look at the variety and usefulness of the information provided and how clearly it is arranged"; these are indicators to the curator's level of commitment to the maintenance of the information.

Kovacs (2002) suggests approaching evaluation of resources with both common sense and subject knowledge. Users should beware of typographical and factual errors; opinion disguised as fact; outdated information; and also bias and deliberate fraud. She encourages every researcher to ask questions of every resource, particularly the identity of the information provider, and the presence of any documentation in support of the validity of the information. UC Berkeley Library (n.d.) encourages readers to look at a website with objectivity, considering what the URL and authorship of the site reveals, the regard of others to the source, but also listening to "your gut reaction" about all the strands of the source coming together and whether this "all add[s] up". "If you cannot find strong, relevant credentials, look very carefully at documentation of sources", and that these are quality, reliable and appropriate; also beware of possible bias in any links section. The ALA (n.d.) advocates examining the authorship and sponsorship of the material, the purpose ("why is it there?"), and design and stability. Content should have an appropriate title, and "there should be enough information to make visiting the site worthwhile". The Centre for Information Quality Management (n.d.)'s *Database Quality Criteria* include the consistency and scope of the subject coverage, and that of the source material. They also consider accessibility/ease of use; timeliness/currency (signs of recent activity); output options, and

the value-to-cost ratio. JISC TechDis (2005) discuss seven main precepts of accessibility: validity of HTML and CSS, browser features (the site remains usable and navigable at different screen resolutions; when the font is enlarged; without images; without JavaScript; and without using the mouse); compliance with accessibility guidelines (W3C 1999); accessibility and usability in practice; usability with assistive technology (screen readers/ magnifiers); and compatibility with both standard and text only/text-to-speech browsers. Howells (1998) encourages users to verify that link titles reflect the actual destination, because misleading titles can lure users to sites offering purely advertising, or worse.

Reid (2003) stresses that "local studies is about specificity and, in many instances, the 'mass of material' simply does not exist". He notes that two of the criteria often considered in information evaluation, drawing a "distinction between the professional and the lay researcher" in terms of authorship, and levels of presentation (audience), are inappropriate for local studies information. "Amateur" researchers often produce a very high level of work formed from working with local sources over many years; therefore sites should be considered for their integrity and contribution "to the comprehensiveness of the collection as a whole, and how it complements others". Reid developed the evaluative mnemonic LOCALITIES ("localness", originality, contribution, authority, level, integrity, time period, interaction, effectiveness, and support), as applied to local studies online material. He suggests that, for historical information, site activity is a more appropriate assessment than currency, reflecting the level of care for the information. Ciolek (1997) suggests that a good quality online resource should: provide their own information, be useful and inform, be easily found and accessible to all, be well organised and presented, and be "easy to establish, run, maintain and improve on". The provider is advised to champion "locally developed materials", and "place local resources in the context of all globally available relevant data". It should also test and evaluate external links, and clearly label information as to whether it is local or external.

Evidence! Citation and Analysis for the Family Historian (Shown Mills 1997a) is a critically important standard work for family historians. She warns it is unsafe to make blanket assumptions about any document or record; it is important to evaluate each record and individual fact on a case-by-case basis. "The reliability of a derivative work is influenced by

the degree of processing it has undergone"; there is more scope for the introduction of errors. She further stresses (1997b) the importance of citations and documentation supporting records and facts. Compiled works must have enough interest for family historians; the quality and appropriateness of the editorial contribution, and enhancements/added context given to the original materials. The National Genealogical Society publishes a number of *Genealogical Standards and Guidelines* (2005). Genealogists must draw attention to anything that is not proven, and "accept digital images or enhancements of an original record as a satisfactory substitute only when there is reasonable assurance that the image accurately reproduces the unaltered original". When "Publishing Web Pages on the Internet" researchers must provide a clear title, purpose, contact details, and identify secondary data, giving "unambiguous source citations". There must also be full labelling and explanations of any scanned images. The *Genealogical Proof Standard* of the Board of Certification for Genealogists (n.d.) calls for a reasonably exhaustive search, complete and accurate citation of sources, analysis and correlation of collected information, and a soundly reasoned, coherently written conclusion.

Ralls (1999) again stresses vigilance and care, not to introduce new errors, and to cite and credit all sources of information. Anything not yet proven, hypothetical, should be highlighted, and "errors that become evident *post facto* should be corrected". Discern (2004), a tool for evaluating health information, similarly suggests that a good quality publication should "make sources of information explicit". *Ancestry Daily News* (Ancestry.com 1999) notes that most data online at that time is secondary, and any record that has been computerised by whatever means introduces a greater margin of error. Researchers must beware of undocumented information. Cummings Cook (1998), Hinkley (n.d) and Casteleyn (2002a, 2002b) all also note the importance of citations, and actively encourage promoting this amongst other researchers. Barratt (2006) recommends verifying author credentials.

Pence (1998) discussed primary and secondary sources and information; primary sources are factual, "contemporary [and] unbiased" records of the event in question, whilst secondary are derived from these, either directly or indirectly. He also notes that primary sources can contain both primary and secondary information; they represent the primary record for one item, but additional secondary information, e.g. ages on a census return. In a similar vein,

Danko (2006) likewise defines original and derivative sources. An original record is created the first time information is fixed in a given form, whether paper or digital. An original source, he argues, can be the original record or an exact image, subject to adequate image quality. A derivative source derives from an original source, and includes transcriptions, abstracts, and compiled sources. RUSA (2003) advocate examining the authenticity and presentation of primary documents, and the person or organization that is making them available. As Swan (2004) and Reid (2003) also note, primary materials (such as old parish registers) may have been created for a different purpose to their current use as genealogical or family history research materials. They encourage trying to identify a clear purpose for the website, and whether an author/organisation may have an agenda for providing the content, from both author credentials and contact information given on the site, but also clues from URLs and domain names. Researchers must identify the origin (image or transcription), and source, especially if records are transcribed. Mulcahy (1998) also states that sources and facts can be primary or secondary, that the origin of the information must be looked at, not just the source (e.g. ages in a census record); researchers must look for consistency of facts. He also gives insightful descriptors of information; either original or compiled records, actual or copied records; primary or secondary information, direct or indirect evidence.

Vanderpool Gormley (n.d.) discusses secondary and compiled works, such as village, church and area histories, and pedigrees. She warns that, although it can be extremely exciting to discover a reference to an ancestor, information "varies greatly in depth and accuracy"; and likewise the quality of such works varies. You can find "wonderful" detail, but everything should be verified with primary or good quality secondary materials. Bigwood (2006) notes that while indexes and transcriptions are incredibly useful, their accuracy is entirely dependent on the "skill of the contributor" and are subject to omissions and other errors. Swan (2004) addresses "genealogically significant sources"; whilst this is more obviously prominent in some records and resources than others (e.g. census, civil registration records), sometimes "a record may appear to lack words identifying a single individual". He cites an example of how a researcher eventually traced a marriage record, starting from a photograph marked only with the studio mark of where it was taken. "The photo didn't have an index or any names, but it was a very valuable clue to finding additional genealogical evidence". The United States Internet Genealogical Society (USIGS n.d.) notes

that, aside from having accuracy, sites must be easily navigated, be "neat, interesting and informative", and have substantial genealogical interest.

5.3   Evaluative Criteria

5.3.1   Criteria Presentation and Usability

The goal of this section is to inform and provide tools for the local studies librarian on the front line. What must be noted first of all is a lack of immediate usability of the criteria in the form presented below. However, these are the criteria in their most extended form. To this end, matrices have been created in Figure 5.1 and Figure 3.7 (3.6) showing a further truncated form of the criteria.

Provider Identity; Purpose; Authority; Objectivity	Scope and Coverage Subject Coverage; Time Period(s); Geographical Coverage; Scope	Types and Formats Formats; Records Databases and Indexing Images and Multimedia Links, Portals and Gateways Mailing Lists, Fora, Newsgroups
Cost	Genealogical Significance Relevance; Provider's relationship to data; Genealogical Scope	Uniqueness
Accuracy and Reliability Accuracy; Degree of Processing; Currency	Design and Presentation	Usability and Accessibility Structure and Organisation; Navigation; Stability; Accessibility; User Support; Search; Registration; Interactivity

Figure 5.1: Criteria Matrix (expanded)

These visual summaries provide a ready-reference for use in the field. As touched on in 5.2, Cooke (2001)'s mix and match approach applies particularly in the types and formats section, as not all criteria will be relevant to each resource. However, her depth and perceptiveness leads to a certain element of repetitiveness, particularly when it comes to types/formats of

content (5.3.5), which can differ wildly from one another. Likewise, the criteria can operate at different levels of detail depending on the resource; whether you are evaluating something highly complex and multi-content like *Ancestry*, or an individual database or pedigree site. As Reid (2003) observes, the level of information is not really a concern, unless it is entirely inappropriate. As indicated in 3.6, resources have been chosen as illustrations, and to represent those used most by the participants in the research.

5.3.2   Provider

Identity

- Who is the provider of the resource/information?

- What kind of organisation does the provider represent? (state; family/local history society; commercial organisation; non-profit organisation; academic; religious body; individual(s), other)

- Are contact details easily obtainable?

- Does the URL accurately reflect the nature of the provider?

Purpose

- What is the purpose of the resource? Is this purpose clear?

- Does the resource fulfil its (stated) purpose?

Authority

- What is the relevant experience/standing of the author and any other party involved in the production of the information? (e.g. editor, compiler, transcriber(s), group administrator, publisher, sponsor, funding agency)

- What does the URL suggest about the authority of the resource provider?

- Does any sponsorship or external funding of the resource enhance or question its reputation?

Objectivity

- ▪ Is the information likely to be biased by any party involved in its production or publication?

- ▪ Is the site purely intended to advertise particular products and/or services?

- ▪ Are advertisements clearly distinguishable from other content?

- ▪ Is the URL deliberately designed to mislead?

FamilySearch is an "official web site of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (Mormon Church). They describe themselves[119] as "the largest genealogy organization in the world" with millions of users. They have been working with records for over 100 years, specifically establishing the *IGI*. They provide free access to the site, over 4500 family history centres worldwide, and their flagship Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah. They wish to connect people, of all faiths, with their ancestors, believing that "family relationships are intended to continue beyond this life". They believe baptism[120] "is essential for salvation in the kingdom of God", and allow Church members to be baptized by proxy on behalf of deceased ancestors[121], if they had not had the opportunity during their lifetime. In addition to a Help research wiki[122], content available on the site includes: Ancestral File; census records (1880 USA; 1881 UK and Canada); the International Genealogical Index; Pedigree Resource File; the US Social Security Death Index; Vital Records Index; and the catalogue of their major family history library in Utah. Ancestral File in particular is constructed from user submissions, and may be biased and/or inaccurate according to the information contributed (5.8.2). They operate an extensive volunteer indexing programme, which is now further facilitated by Internet communication and online communities[123]. Volunteers are currently involved in indexing: the US 1930 Federal Census; Essex Parish Registers; and the *Baden Achern Church Book* (Germany).

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[119] Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011c. *About FamilySearch* [online] Available at: http://www.familysearch.org/eng/default.asp?page=/eng/Policy/about_us.asp [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[120] Mormon.org, 2011. *Frequently Asked Questions* [online] Available at: http://mormon.org/faq/#Baptism|question=/faq/baptism-for-the-dead/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[121] Using only the name of the deceased.

[122] Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011d. *Research Wiki* [online] Available at: https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/Main_Page [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[123] Facebook.com, 2011d. *FamilySearch Indexing* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/familysearchindexing [Accessed 3 August 2011]

5.3.3   Scope and Coverage

Subject Coverage

- ▪   What subject/subject areas does the resource cover?

Time Period

- ▪   What time period(s) does the resource cover?

Geographical Coverage

- ▪   Is the coverage of the resource national or local?

- ▪   Does the resource cover any neighbouring areas?

- ▪   If not immediately "locally" relevant, could the information still be useful or of interest?

Scope

- ▪   Is the scope of the resource stated? Does this match expectations?

- ▪   (Is the information pitched at an appropriate (general) level?)

- ▪   Are depth and scope consistent throughout the resource?

- ▪   Are there gaps in the resource's coverage of a particular area?

- ▪   Are sources of further information suggested?

Historical Directories is a lottery-funded project co-ordinated largely by the University of Leicester, which has digitised and made freely available various directories, drawn from many different repositories across the country. The resource provides national coverage of England and Wales, providing interest and relevance for academics, teachers and local and family historians[124]. At base level, the project seeks to provide at least one directory per county for each of the following decades: 1850s; 1890s; 1910s; decades the project team felt were particularly interesting. This aim is met. They also aim to provide certain directories from other periods, but categorically state they do not attempt to "publish every directory available between 1750 and 1919"; there is more in-depth coverage of Leicestershire, London and Wales. Directories cover a wide range of subjects, and are revealing about the time period, even if not immediately local to an area of research. They will also reveal

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[124] Historical Directories, 2011x. *About our project* [online] Available at: http://www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/about.asp [Accessed 3 August 2011]

descriptions and histories of the relevant area, including details of infrastructure, facilities, associations, and local trade and industry (including listings of local traders and professionals). Further links are offered to a number of genealogy, local, and military history sites.

5.3.4 Genealogical Significance

Relevance

- Is the resource of potential interest to family historians?

- Is there enough information (or wide enough personal coverage) to make visiting the site worthwhile?

Provider's Relationship to Data

- Does the provider own or originally produce the content?

- If no, who was the original owner/producer, and what is their relationship with the provider?

- What is the motivation of the provider in making this information available?

- Is there a statement of copyright ownership?

Genealogical Scope

- Does the information lead to or establish a genealogical fact (connecting any 2 of place, date, name, or event)? Does it lead to other data? Does the information provide social or local historical context? Is the only information family trees or pedigrees?

- What was the original purpose of the record or information? Is the resource faithful to the original records?

ScotlandsPeople (5.8.3), the official provider of Scottish information, is a world-leader in e-record provision. It is a pay-as-you-go e-commerce site, operated by partners the GROS, NAS and the Court of the Lord Lyon, enabled by brightsolid online publishing. The resource now boasts "searches of 50 million names, has more than 30 million images and over three

quarters of a million registered customers"[125]. brightsolid are now a well-established genealogical provider, owning *FindMyPast* and its companion sites, recently acquired *Genes Reunited*, and were commissioned to digitise the UK 1911 Census. Copyright is held by the Crown and by brightsolid ltd. Originally *Scots Origins* (part of the *Origins* Network), the service was established in 1998 as a response to vastly increasing demand for service and record access at the GROS (Longmore 2000). Initially only indexes were online, and users ordered physical copies of records and certificates. With national coverage across Scotland, it is highly relevant to family historians, with civil registration and census records the main authoritative sources of genealogical facts. The resource provides fully-indexed digital images of Scottish Statutory Registers (births; marriages; deaths); Old Parish and Catholic Registers (births and baptisms; banns and marriages; deaths and burials); and census records (1841-1911). Wills, testaments and coats of arms can also be searched free of charge. These are largely presented in TIFF format (a widely used flexible, adaptable archival file format for handling images and data within a single file), although more recently-produced images (e.g. the 1911 census) are in JPEG format. They represent exact images of primary records, and are therefore faithful to their original contents.

5.3.5   Types/Formats of Content

General

- What types of content are available from the resource?

- What file formats are used? Are these proprietary or open source? Are file sizes appropriate?

- Is the balance of content appropriate?

- Is standard information (e.g. times of opening) clear and visible?

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[125] brightsolid, 2011c. *brightsolid Online Publishing* [online] Available at: http://www.brightsolid.com/about-brightsolid/brightsolid-online-publishing [3 August 2011]

Records

- What is the origin of the record? Is it a photographic copy (electronic, from fiche/film/photocopy); Is it a transcription/extracted/abstract; Is it printed or manuscript;

- What was the transcription method (e.g. keyed/OCR)?

- Are/were the records original or compiled?

- Is the record a primary or secondary record?

- Does the record provide primary or secondary information?

- Does this information offer direct or indirect evidence?

Databases and Indexing

- What information is displayed for each database entry? (full text/full image options where relevant?)

- What fields have been indexed/are searchable? Are Soundex or other enhanced search features available?

- Does the database contain user-submitted materials, such as GEDCOMs[126]? Are they labelled as such?

- Are different versions of the same database or index available? Are there any differences in coverage or method of production?

Images and Other Multimedia

- Is there an appropriate level of explanatory text? Does this add value to the images or other materials?

- Are image sizes (e.g. thumbnails) and resolutions appropriate?

External Links (and Gateways, Portals)

- What subject areas and types of materials are covered?

- Are links/resources selected and evaluated prior to their inclusion? (And by whom?)

- Are descriptions provided for each resource?

- Are the links valuable, useful and appropriate?

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[126] GEnealogical Data COMmunication (GEDCOM) is a file format for exchange of genealogical data.

- Are links the sole content of the resource?

- Is it clear that by following a link you are leaving the current site? (Is a disclaimer given?)

- Do link titles (or labels) reflect their destination?

- Are links provided purely for revenue generation?

Mailing lists, fora and newsgroups

- Does useful discussion and exchange take place within threads?

- What is the likely knowledge and expertise of the participants?

- Are archived messages available and searchable?

Cyndi's List is a well-established genealogy and family history directory site, run solely by independent genealogist Cyndi Howells[127], now containing 307,357[128] genealogy and family history links in 186 Categories, with additional pages on geographical areas (US states, counties; Canadian provinces, and UK counties)[129]. The vast majority of the content consists of links, but it does also contain a few of Howells' own material, such as her writings on *Internet Genealogy[130]*. Categories are displayed in alphabetical order, either all together, or in A-Z format; websites are ordered by their title tag. Links can also be accessed by a site search. A date of last update is given for each category, and the current numbers of links in each. Pages also feature a sub-category index, and related categories. Links open in a new window. There are a significant number of broken links, perhaps inevitable in a resource of this size that is a one-person operation. It has a very readable, clean design which is easy to navigate, and being mostly text and links, loads extremely quickly. Advertising is present, but is clearly distinguished as such. Most links are submitted by users, and their titles and descriptions appear as they were submitted via a web form. These are first added temporarily added to a page of uncategorised[131] links by a "computerized script". At this stage they are unverified. Before they are added to the main directory, they are reviewed for their appropriateness and accuracy, and placed in the appropriate category. Currently there

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[127] Howells, C., 2011b. *Cyndi's List - About Cyndi* [online] Available at: http://www.cyndislist.com/aboutus/ [3 August 2011]
[128] As of 3 August 2011.
[129] Howells, C., 2011c. *Cyndi's List – FAQs.* [online] Available at: http://www.cyndislist.com/faqs/ [3 August 2011]
[130] Howells, C., 2011d. *Cyndi's List - Internet Genealogy: Cyndi's Soapbox* [online] Available at: http://www.cyndislist.com/Internet-genealogy/cyndis-soapbox/ [3 August 2011]
[131] There were 7997 uncategorized links as of 3 August 2011.

is a backlog, and the waiting list stretches back to 2006. Disclaimers[132] regarding the site's content are accessible directly from the homepage. Howells provides a statement that the provider holds no responsibility for the contents of sites linked from there, offers no endorsement of the services or products, and will not knowingly link to sites that derive from or participate in fraudulent or illegal behaviour.

5.3.6 Accuracy and Reliability

Accuracy

- What is the (likely) accuracy of information provided? Is this fact-based?

- Do facts appear consistent throughout?

- Does the resource appear professionally produced?

- Can corrections be submitted?

- Have citations or references been given? Is further supporting documentation available?

- Has the information been subject to quality-control processes, e.g. refereeing?

Degree of Processing

- Was the source originally produced in electronic format, or based on original documents/converted from a hard copy source?

- What potential has there been for the introduction of copy errors or possible bias?

- Are any editorial contributions marked as such? Do they enhance the resource (e.g. add context (maps, photos, etc.))?

"Currency"

- Is there evidence of recent activity on the site?

- When was the resource originally produced (in either printed or electronic form)?

- When was the information last updated (if appropriate)?

- Does the site appear generally well maintained? Are any links current?

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[132]Howells, C., 2011e. *Cyndi's List –Disclaimers.* [online] http://www.cyndislist.com/disclaimers/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

Following discussion in 5.3.3, information within *Historical Directories* was digitised directly from original sources, with only the omission of large, fragile, folded maps which were unsuitable to be scanned. Directories can be browsed by geographic area, decade, or searched by keyword; an advanced search is also available. Although the site is indexed, there is no full-text version; there is the possibility of the introduction of error within the indexing process. Images are viewable as PNG or PDF files of a page image; PDF is recommended for better rendering (and printing) of photographs, maps and sketches. From the search results, the user can proceed straight to directory (or to the page where a keyword has been located), or access a fact file. This fact file includes the source information of each directory, including: full title; date; publishing information; area of coverage; location; any specific notes about the volume; the digitisation of the volume (such as items or illustrations that could not be digitised); the main headings (in the directory itself); any notable features; keywords and other specific metadata. Each individual directory can also be searched directly. Searching the site does require the use of JavaScript. A highly detailed technical FAQ covers most elements of the site's operation. The digitising project is no longer active, and no date of last update is given, but all links appear current and functional, and active contact details are available, although they warn that a response will not be provided quickly.

5.3.7   Cost

- Does it cost anything to access the resource?
- What charging schemes or subscription options are available? Are trial period options available?
- Are any charges worth it?

Ancestry was one of the first commercial genealogy sites (Morgan 2007; Garrett 2010); now featuring over 4 billion records. *Ancestry.co.uk* offers different levels of subscription, giving different levels of access to records. These are detailed in Table 5.1:

Package	Essentials	Premium	Worldwide
Monthly Subscription	£10.95	£12.95	£18.95
Yearly Subscription (Monthly Equivalent)	£83.40 (£6.95)	£107.40 (£8.95)	£155.40 (£12.95)
Family Tree Builder; connect with other members	X	X	X
UK census and civil registration records	X	X	X
Parish registers		X	X
Military, immigration and Irish records		X	X
Entire library access; new releases			X
Overseas records			X

Table 5.1: Ancestry.co.uk Subscription Packages[133]

They offer a well-publicised 14-day trial (5.8.1); although credit card details have to be given, and the trial automatically rolls onto a subscription should it not be cancelled beforehand. Those not wishing to subscribe can access certain aspects on a pay-per-view basis: 12 record views for (£6.95 by credit card, or a voucher which allows 10 record views for those who wish to avoid using a credit card (although vouchers don't seem to be available anymore[134]). Users can also access free information, but cannot connect other members or other subscriber-only options. Credits expire after 14 days, but will reactivate if further credits are purchased. No information is given regarding Library Edition subscriptions. The site provides access to a considerable volume of information, which is certainly worth the cost should you expect to use the site a great deal.

5.3.8   *Design and Presentation*

▪ Is the design of the resource attractive, clear and uncluttered? Has an appropriate choice of text and colours been used?

▪ Can information be read clearly on screen, or can it become lost in a complex design? Is white space well used to enhance readability?

▪ Have any graphics or moving images been used appropriately?

▪ Is the text well formatted and edited? Are there grammatical or spelling errors?

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[133] Ancestry, 2011c. *Sign up now!* [online] Available at: http://www.ancestry.co.uk/subscribe/signup.aspx [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[134] National Archives, 2011d. *Bookshop* [online] Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/bookshop/details.aspx?titleId=265 [Accessed 3 August 2011]

FreeBMD is a volunteer project, transcribing civil registration indexes for England and Wales, and providing free Internet access to these transcribed records. The index covers the period 1837-1983, but is still incomplete. In July 2011, it contained well over 250 million individual records. Advertising and sponsorship is delineated, and now feature ALT-text disclaimers for additional identification. No warranty whatsoever is made as to the accuracy or completeness of the *FreeBMD* data. It has a simple and slightly dated design, which has not particularly altered over the years, although it is evidently an active site. Page text initially appears on the small side, but contrasts well, and scales up well with browser settings. There is not much white space, and pages can feel slightly cluttered at times. The background watermark, while a neutral colour, does make text a little harder to read (Figure 5.2):
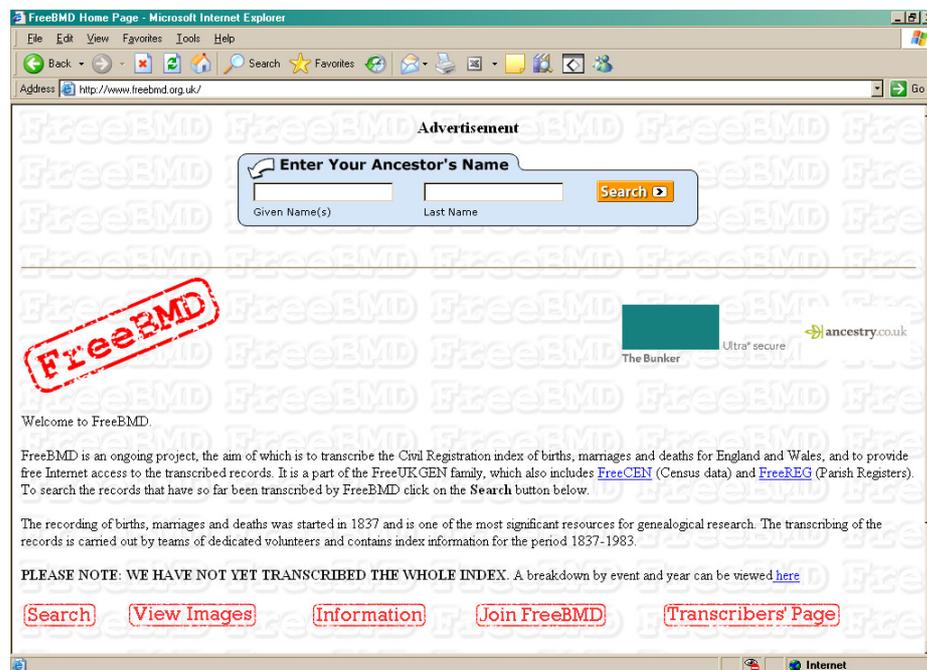
Figure 5.2: FreeBMD

This also improves however as text is scaled up. There is not much use of graphics, but this is in keeping with the style and simplicity of the site. Some images of index pages are included; however these are not automatically displayed, but saved to the user's computer in a variety of formats. Text is well-written and presented in short paragraphs, with no obvious errors.

5.3.9 Usability and Accessibility

Structure and Organisation

- Is the resource organised in a logical manner? Is the organisational scheme appropriate, e.g. chronological (historical information) or geographical (regional information)?

- Are headings clear and useful?

- Is the presentation and arrangement of each page consistent throughout the resource?

- Has adequate cross-referencing between subjects/information been used?

Navigation and Signposting

- Is it easy to move around the source and locate information? Is browsing user-friendly and intuitive?

- Is navigation logical and consistent?

- Are there any navigation facilities, such as a site map, A-Z, contents list, or index? Are they effective?

- Can you reach information within a reasonable number of 'clicks'?

- Can links be easily identified? Do they interrupt the flow of the text?

- Is there always a visible link back to the homepage?

- Are page/document titles (and URLs) meaningful and appropriate?

- Is it possible to bookmark an internal page?

- Do you have a consistent sense of your location/context/position/level within the resource?

Stability

- Is the site location stable? If the site moves, is forwarding information provided?

- Is access to the resource reliable (is it frequently offline)?

- Is the resource visible?

Accessibility

- Can text be scaled successfully?

- Do all the images have alt-tags?

- Is there a text-only version? Is meaning lost by not viewing the graphics?

- Are there features (e.g. frames, white type that cannot be printed, Java) which make it difficult to use or prevent some users from accessing it?

- Does the site view well in different browsers?

- Is any additional software required? Is this easily available? Are there clear instructions about special software requirements?

- Are file sizes appropriate? Do files load quickly?

User support

- Are sources of help available? Context sensitive? Useful?

- Are there any other features such as FAQs or instructional materials?

- Do people know about the collection they are trying to search in?

Search

- Is a search facility provided? Are there any advanced search options, operators and ranking features? Is the search engine interface intuitive?

- Is all content searchable? Altogether or in sections?

Registration

- Do you need to register to use the site?

- Is registration straightforward?

- Are there any restrictions to registration, subscription or membership?

Interactivity

- Can queries be posted on the website?

- Are there any online ordering facilities? Are any online transaction or payment facilities secure?

- Are any interactive features reliable and appropriate? Do they add value to the resource?

BBC Family History is a set of pages largely providing instructional information, but also gives access to local and social history information, such as user-submitted photographs, and links in to BBC family history content such as *WDYTYA?* Moving around the pages and browsing material is reasonably easy, and an A-Z index of the site is available. Information can be immediately reached from clear links situated at the side; however these do change sides depending which page the user is on. The overall structure is perhaps a little unclear; although URLs are hierarchical, the user does not always have the best sense of location, and can easily find themselves at a different "home", the subpage of the *History* section[135]. This presents largely the same information and links, but with slightly more whitespace and sense of calm; headings (which are clear and straightforward) remain the same throughout both. Bookmarking an individual page is no problem.

The entire BBC website is reliably stable, and can be regarded as having the authenticity of a government source in all but name, yet with an air of independence. There are very few problems with site overloading, and this has improved significantly in recent years. The resource is highly visible; is referred and linked to; and is well regarded by researchers (5.9) The BBC's *Accessibility Help*[136] page, alongside clear and thorough instructions, gives users ability to change text sizes and colours. Although most images had alt-tags, a few were missing. A text-only version was not located; however readability, rendering in different browsers, and easy loading presented no problems. A 'help' or FAQ link is always present; these are clear and context sensitive to the area of the BBC site. The search facility (with FAQ available[137]) searches the entire contents of the BBC site in addition to the Family History section, with results ranked by relevance; the area of the BBC site from which you perform the search is considered within the relevance calculation. The collection of user-submitted photographs can be searched independently, with a more sophisticated search mechanism. Users must register with the site to make use of interactive features, such as posting on the message board (which appears very active); however the process is straightforward with no restrictions. Otherwise content can be read and access with no registration requirement.

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[135] BBC, 2011a. *Family History.* [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]
[136] BBC, 2011b. *Accessibility.* [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]
[137] BBC, 2011c. *Search FAQ.* [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/search/help/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

5.3.10 "Uniqueness"

- ▪ Is the source unique in terms of content or format, or feature unique elements or facilities?

- ▪ How does the site compare with similar sites?

- ▪ What is the reputation of the resource? Are there any reviews discussing the resource?

Personal home pages, typically web pages written, designed and uploaded by individuals, do not have the best image in terms of their quality. While some do fall into this category, many can be well constructed and contain useful information, and can be "primary information" in the right circumstances (Narsesian 2004), as is particularly the case in local studies and family history. "The 'bad' item may be unreliable, inaccurate, lacking in authority but it may also contain one single paragraph that is priceless in local studies terms" (Reid, 2003). For example, a resource used by D03, *Tweetybird's Genealogy Tree*[138], appears at first glance to be a fairly rough-looking personal home page, useful in terms of genealogy search links, passenger lists and information on "British Home Children". A combination of links and data are provided on the page, which were not always referenced. This information should be approached with extreme caution, but, as FF1 attested, "an index is an indication there's something to go look at"; the site may provide a clue to a direction of research to be verified elsewhere.

The website of the *Aberdeen and North East Scotland Family History Society*[139] is a straightforward site, with a design that has not been updated in some years; although it shows definite signs of activity, and links to *Facebook* and *Twitter* accounts. It is unique in that it is the one FHS covering the (historic) areas of Aberdeenshire, Banffshire, Kincardineshire and Morayshire. In addition to society information, the site publishes an index for the Memorial Inscriptions[140] booklets published by the society, and an interactive map of burial

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[138] Rootsweb, 2009. *Tweetybird's Genealogy Tree* [online] Available at: freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~tweetybirdgenealogy/ [Accessed 23 October 2009]

[139] ANESFHS, 2011a. Aberdeen and North East Scotland Family History Society. [online] Available at: http://www.anesfhs.org.uk [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[140] ANESFHS, 2011b. *Index to MI Booklets published by ANESFHS* [online] Available at: http://www.anesfhs.org.uk/databank/miindex/miindex.php [Accessed 3 August 2011]

grounds in the area[141], which also included any available images, and listed the surnames included in the index. This was well-thought of by several participants (5.9).

5.4   User Source Preferences

The focus now shifts to user interactions with these e-family history resources. All participants in the study were generally very enthusiastic regarding their development, diversity, and effect on the research process. As previously discussed (1.2), e-resources have "revolutionised" ease of access, both in terms of location (FA1) and improvements to indexing and searching facilities (FA5), as illustrated below:

> *I've been looking at the 1841 census on film at the local library, peering at it and trying to read it, and the fact that now I can just type in a name and people come up, so they've done all the hard stuff.* (FA5)

> *...the wonderful thing with marriages is, when I went down to London, you had to look up both books: you had to look up the husband and the wife and see whether or not the reference matched, But now you just feed in the 2 surnames and throw up anything where these 2 surnames appear... a definite step forward...* (FA1)

Focus group interviews (3.7.4) began with a discussion about participants' "favourite" sites for research on the Internet[142]. The "favourite" label was applied to both preferred resources, and those sites that were returned to frequently, although they could be one in the same. It was also noted that a "favourite often tends to be the [resource] that you need at that time" (FF3). The most popular resources in the discussions were: *Ancestry*[143] (5); *FamilySearch* (5); *ScotlandsPeople* (4); (*Scots Origins*[144] (2)); *Genes Reunited* (3); *FreeBMD* (4); *Google*[145]; *National Archives* (4); *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*[146] *(CWGC)* (4); and *FindMyPast* (3). Numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of groups in which a resource was discussed.

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[141] ANESFHS, 2011c, 2011. *Burial Grounds in Northeast Scotland* [online] Available at: http://www.abdnet.co.uk/burialgrounds/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[142] All resources used or mentioned by any participant during the study are listed in Appendix 15.

[143] Ancestry, 2011a. *Ancestry.com* [online] Available at: http://www.ancestry.com [Accessed 13 September 2011] or other National variants.

[144] Until 2002, Scots Origins was the holder of the rights to publish Scottish Registration Information online. This was then taken over by ScotlandsPeople (Christian 2009).

[145] Google, 2011. *Google* [online] Available at: http://www.google.com [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[146] CWGC, 2011. *Commonwealth War Graves* Commission [online] Available at: http://www.cwgc.org/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

Other resources less frequently highlighted as favourites included: *RootsWeb* Mailing Lists[147],

Access2Archives[148] *(A2A)*; *GENUKI*[149], *RootsChat*[150]; *Moray Libindx*[151]; *Long Long Trail*[152];

ANESFHS[153]; *Cyndi's List*[154]; *Society of Genealogists* (*SoG*); *Old Bailey Online*[155]; *Talking Scot*[156];

History of Ayrshire Villages[157]; *Historical Directories*[158]; *ParishRegister.com*[159]; *The Genealogist*[160];

Times Archives[161]; and *London Gazette*[162]. Group members were also keen to assert the value of

resources used on a less regular basis, of which some of the immediately above resources are

likely to have been part; "there are other things which I've used as a one-off which had been

very interesting at the time, which I wouldn't necessarily remember, but they have been

useful. So I wouldn't say favourite, but I have used them" (FF5). This may reveal something

about the relative popularity of the larger resources; users are more likely to need to return

there more often than to a smaller site. LS13 noted that users "primarily go to well

publicised" resources (7.8). More specific attributions of favourite resources to group

participants (Appendix 16) reveal that either *Ancestry* or *ScotlandsPeople* is cited first by the

vast majority of group members. Resources used by shadowees used (Appendix 17) again

illustrate a high level of use of *ScotlandsPeople*, *Ancestry*, and *FamilySearch*. Table 5.1 below

shows the most popular resources with diary participants, and demonstrates a similar

pattern in terms of frequently used resources, not only in terms of frequency of use, but also

in terms of unique users.

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[147] RootsWeb, 2011b. *Mailing Lists* [online] Available at: http://lists.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]
[148] National Archives, 2011c. *Access to Archives* [online] Available at: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[149] GENUKI, 2011. *GENUKI* [online] Available at: http://www.genuki.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[150] RootsChat.com. 2011. *Roots Chat* [online] Available at: http://www.rootschat.com [Accessed 3 August 2011]
[151] Moray Council, 2011. *Libindx* [online] Available at: http://libindx.moray.gov.uk/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]
[152] Baker, C., 2011. *The Long, Long Trail* [online] Available at: http://www.1914-1918.net/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]
[153] ANESFHS, 2011c. *Aberdeen and North East Scotland Family History Society* [online] Available at: http://www.anesfhs.org.uk/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]
[154] Howells, C., 2011a. *Cyndi's List* [online] Available at: http://www.cyndislist.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[155] Old Bailey Proceedings Online, 2011. *Old Bailey Online* [online] Available at: http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/ [Accessed 24 March 2011]
[156] [Talking Scot, 2011. *Talking Scot* [online] Available at: http://www.talkingscot.com/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]
[157] Baird, K., 2011. *Ayrshire History.com* [online] Available at: http://www.ayrshirehistory.com/ [Accessed 24 March 2011]
[158] Historical Directories, 2011x. *Historical Directories* [online] Available at: http://www.historicaldirectories.org [Accessed 24 March 2011]
[159] Docklands Ancestors, 2011. *ParishRegister.com* [online] Available at: http://www.parishregister.com/ [Accessed 24 March 2011]
[160] TheGenealogist, 2011. *The Genealogist* [online] Available at: http://www.thegenealogist.co.uk/ [Accessed 24 March 2011]
[161] The Times, 2011. *The Times Archives* [online] Available at: http://archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive/ [Accessed 24 March 2011]
[162] London Gazette, 2011. *The London Gazette* [online] Available at: http://www.london-gazette.co.uk/ [Accessed 24 March 2011]

Top 20 Sites: Frequency of Use	#	Top 20 Sites: Unique Users	#
Ancestry[163]	58	Ancestry	17
FamilySearch	41	FamilySearch	17
Google[164]	33	Google	13
ScotlandsPeople	25	Family History Societies	9
Genes Reunited	21	Genes Reunited	8
Family History Societies[165]	13	ScotlandsPeople	7
FreeBMD	13	FreeBMD	6
WorldConnect	10	GENUKI	6
GENUKI	9	National Archives	6
National Archives	8	CWGC	5
FreeCEN	6	FindMyPast	4
NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages[166]	5	FreeCEN	4
CWGC	5	FreeREG	4
Family History Online	5	RootsWeb	4
FindMyPast	5	WorldConnect	3
RootsWeb	5	A2A	3
Yorkshire BMD[167]	5	Family History Online	3
Amazon[168]	4	Wikipedia[169]	3
FreeREG	4	Social Security Death Index[170]	2
Multimap[171]	4	About.com[172]	2

Table 5.2: Most Popular Resources from Diary sessions – Frequency and Unique Uses

As can been seen from all these elements, the above discussion, four online resources are cited and/or used far more frequently by the participants: *Ancestry*, *ScotlandsPeople*, *FamilySearch*, and *Genes Reunited*, described by D06 as "the staples of my search".

> *The big 3 for me are definitely the Family Search site for access to the IGI...and then quickly followed on by ScotlandsPeople and Ancestry…vital to my daily sanity!* (FE1).

Table 5.3 below illustrates how frequently these four resources were used within the diary sessions. Numbers in parenthesis indicate the number of sessions each diarist completed, giving a further indication of how often used by one particular diarist.

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[163] Collated visits to all variants (e.g. ancestry.com, ancestry.co.uk, ancestry.ca, etc.).

[164] Collated visits to all variants (e.g. google.com, google.co.uk, etc.).

[165] Visits to all FHS Websites were collated. This gives a better indicator of overall use compared to National resources.

[166] New South Wales Government, 2011. *Registry of Births, Marriages and Deaths* [online] Available at: http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au [Accessed 24 March 2011]

[167] UKBMD, 2011. *Yorkshire BMD* [online] Available at: http://www.yorkshirebmd.org.uk/

[168] Collated visits to all national variants (e.g.Amazon.com, Amazon.co.uk, etc.).

[169] Wikipedia, 2011. *Wikipedia.* [online] Available at: http://www.wikipedia.org/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[170] Rootsweb, 2008. *Social Security Death Index.* [online] Available at: http://ssdi.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ [Accessed 10 March 2008]

[171] Multimap.com, 2009. *Multimap* [online] Available at: http://www.multimap.co.uk [Accessed 3 April 2009]

[172] About.com, 2011. *About.com* [online] Available at: http://www.about.com [Accessed 13 September 2011]

	Ancestry[173] Used in x Sessions	FamilySearch Used in x Sessions	ScotlandsPeople Used in x Sessions	Genes Reunited used in x Sessions
D01	7(8)	7(8)	0(8)	0(8)
D02	2(4)	0(4)	0(4)	0(4)
D03	0(8)	2(8)	0(8)	0(8)
D05	0(1)	0(1)	0(1)	0(1)
D06	3(8)	4(8)	8(8)	6(8)
D07	2(8)	1(8)	4(8)	0(8)
D08	4(8)	2(8)	1(8)	0(8)
D09	8(8)	5(8)	0(8)	1(8)
D10	1(1)	0(1)	0(1)	0(1)
D11	5(8)	1(8)	1(8)	4(8)
D12	0(8)	3(8)	8(8)	0(8)
D14	0(6)	4(6)	0(6)	0(6)
D16	0(8)	4(8)	0(8)	4(8)
D17	0(4)	0(4)	0(4)	0(4)
D19	3(8)	1(8)	0(8)	3(8)
D20	1(8)	1(8)	0(8)	2(8)
D22	6(8)	2(8)	2(8)	0(8)
D23	5(7)	0(7)	0(7)	0(7)
D24	1(1)	1(1)	0(1)	0(1)
D26	1(1)	1(1)	0(1)	0(1)
D27	2(8)	1(8)	0(8)	2(8)
D28	0(1)	0(1)	1(1)	0(1)
D30	5(8)	1(8)	0(8)	1(8)

Table 5.3: Diarists' use of popular e-resources

Only one diarist (D17) did not use any of these 4 resources, showing again their penetration throughout all investigated users. *ScotlandsPeople* had the fewest unique users; however it has a more limited potential user base than the others, with only Scottish data, and was used heavily by those who used it. Reasons participants gave for returning to a particular resource were primarily concerned with its informational content, i.e. that sites have what users want in terms of content (FD1; FE1; FF1, 2; FG1). "The sites I named have the information I'm looking for" (FE1), and conversely "If a site doesn't cover what I want...no point going". (FD1). "If you're looking at the original images and they've been well digitised then it's not necessary to go anywhere else" (FF3). FE2 also looked for "records unique to that site". This is naturally very much allied with how much success a researcher has with a particular site (FA4; FB2). "I'm still getting information from them…I can still go to *ScotlandsPeople* for example as a first port of call, if I know that I'm looking for a birth or a marriage in a particular time frame" (FB2). It is clear that repeated success with quality information is instrumental in attracting users back to resources.

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[173] Collated visits to all variants (e.g. ancestry.com, ancestry.co.uk, ancestry.ca, Ancestry Library Edition, etc.).

It also appears to be important (at least retrospectively) that resources are seen to be constantly under development (FA1, 5; FB1; FC2). This was discussed (and subsequently confirmed by fellow group members) largely in terms of *Ancestry*, which is "always putting new stuff on" (FA5), but also of *FreeBMD* (FA1) and *FreeCEN* (FB1). Ease of Use (FA5;FC1;FG2) was also an important factor, cited most often regarding *ScotlandsPeople,* as not only did "they have everything" in the one site, "you can order, and pay on line which is a big plus from here in NZ" (FG2). Familiarity with a site was also noted as a compelling reason to return (FA1; FF4, 5).

> *There is so much variety of search facilities between different sites, that once you've learned one and found you can get good results from it, it's a tremendous incentive to stay with it…but it's only from learned ways of making the Ancestry search engine work for me, and I'd be very reluctant to use any other one now, as I'd have to start again; start thinking again!* (FF4)

Repeated use can also create a sense of loyalty (FC3) and trust in a resource (FA1). FA1 noted that free trials too (perhaps inadvertently) build up loyalty; indeed FC3 described himself as an "*Ancestry* person" that couldn't be converted. Having a subscription to a resource such as *Ancestry* was also cited as a factor (FF3, 4); however this is probably also associated with success and satisfaction with a resource's content, stages which have preceded purchasing the subscription.

Table 5.4 explores the instinctive destinations of the shadowed family historians (3.7.3), importantly revealing which sites participants immediately associated with specific types of information. These were not necessarily where shadowees finally retrieved the relevant information from, but where their "first instincts" were telling them to go. Again, *ScotlandsPeople* (although likely more prevalent here owing to the definite inclusion of Scottish research questions), *Ancestry*, and *FamilySearch* were the primary destinations for most participants when seeking concrete genealogical facts (1.5, 5.2), confirming earlier findings that these sites were the most popular. Participants were more inclined to turn to familiar resources for known items, and search (with *Google* being the only search engine used) for information that was not known/unknown.

	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*
Information Type Sought	*Marriage (Scotland)*	*Map*	*Birth (England)*	*Local History*	*Death (Scotland)*	*Census (England)*	*Photograph/ Image*	*Will (Scotland)*
s1	*ScotlandsPeople*	Search	Search: England birth	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*	Search: NA Census	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*
s2	*ScotlandsPeople*	Search	*FamilySearch*	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*	Search: England Census	Search	*ScotlandsPeople (Famous Scots)*
s3	*ScotlandsPeople*	*Old-Maps*	*Ancestry*	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*	*Ancestry*	Search	*NAS*
s4	*FamilySearch*	*FamilySearch/ Ancestry*	*Ancestry*	*Ancestry*	*Ancestry*	*Ancestry*	***	*Ancestry*
s5	*FamilySearch*	Search	*FamilySearch*	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*	Search: NA Census	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*
s6	*ScotlandsPeople*	Search	*NA*	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*	Search: England Census	*SCRAN*	*ScotlandsPeople*
s7	*FamilySearch*	*Old-Maps*	*FamilySearch*	Search	*FamilySearch*	***174	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*
s8	*FamilySearch*	*Old-Maps*	*FMP*	Search	*FamilySearch*	*FindMyPast*	Search	*ScotlandsPeople (FS)*
s9	*ScotlandsPeople*	Search	*Ancestry*	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*	*Ancestry*	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*
s10	*FamilySearch*	*Old-Maps*	Search: Birth Index England	Search	*ANESFHS*	*Genes Reunited*	Search	*ScotlandsPeople*
s11	*FamilySearch*	*Old-Maps*	*FamilySearch*	Search	*FamilySearch*	Search: England Census	Search	*ScotlandsPeople (FS)*

Table 5.4: Shadowees' First Destinations for Short Queries

174 Question not attempted.

5.5   *Source Selection, Evaluation and Discovery*

Reasons researchers selected one source over another appear to be very closely tied to why they returned to their favourite sites. FA5 was very clear in her reasoning, and had "2 criteria...one would be the ease of searching and the indexing, and the other would be the cost". As she worked as a librarian she may have been slightly unrepresentative of other researchers; however other group participants had similar views, and although not expressed in the same terms, both her criteria were reflected throughout others' comments. What appeared most important was the right quality of content, and *repeated success with that content*, and these were at the forefront of discussions.

> *If the website has the data you want to see...then to me that rates first* (FE1)
> *I would go to the one I've found has been the most successful. I don't find I get as many good results with FreeCEN and FreeBMD as I do with Ancestry, quite honestly.* (FA4)
> *There's certain sites I know will give me an answer - there's always a result in it. FreeBMD, I know I'll get an answer.* (FA2)

Content also has to be reliable; FG2 always aimed to use official sources (in this case *ScotlandsPeople*), "hence my reluctance to use the Latter Day Saints for anything", despite any advantages it may afford (5.8.2). FA1 preferred UK-based resources, as she felt there would be a lower rate of transcription error with greater local knowledge. Content must be relevant to their research, whatever the cost. Financial motives were still important; this could mean using a free version of certain information as a first port of call (FB1; FE2; S7), or alternatively, where a researcher holds a subscription to a particular resource, e.g. *Ancestry*, (FC2; FF3; FG1), using it preferentially, wanting the best value for their subscription. As FA5 indicated, ease of use of a resource is also a consideration. "Is it going to be easy to find what I need?" (FE2). FB2 was "not that interested" if finding information wasn't obvious; "because I work on the principle that if it was meant to be found, it would be easily found, and that was what I was taught at college. So that's my philosophy on it". Differences in search and index fields also impacted on resource selection. "Some permit search on occupation for example. Some permit search with no surname" (FE1); and also "there's perhaps more of a need to go elsewhere if you can't find it in the index, to try someone else's index" (FF2). FA2 also noted that a resource had to be memorable; he would access the one he remembered.

Participants showed awareness of the importance of information quality and evaluation, and of potentially misleading information on the Internet: "when people say 'oh, we've got lots of relatives for you, we can write the book for you!' Well you know they can't' (FC2). Another concern regarding information on the Internet was that of data security (5.8.4). Uploading a family tree to an insecure source can reveal potentially sensitive information, such as "your mother's maiden name" (FC1) in the case of bank accounts. "I've got most of my stuff on a couple of sites, because they screen out living relatives; they don't put the personal information on of anybody living, which I think is good" (FC3). Although issues with online information are highly publicised and discussed, FF5 reminded us that the same problems existed pre-Internet; the difference now is that poor information can be easily seen and transmitted by many more researchers.

Researchers do not appear to consider quality in terms of a whole source, much more on the micro-level of each individual record, even strand of information. The inclusion of primary data is key to trust here. "In terms of actual records, I will *only* trust the original images" (FF3). He would happily use transcriptions, but they would be noted in the research as such. Similarly, the source of the information was of equal concern (FC1, 3). For example, FG2 asks "Is it official? Has it been copied from somewhere else? And most importantly, is it accurate?" FC3 also noted the need to ascertain the origin of information within *FamilySearch*; distinguishing between information extracted from parish records (which is more reliable) from that submitted by users. The ability to seek out good quality information is evidence of a high level of information literacy amongst virtually all (with perhaps 2 exceptions) participants in the study's latter stages (6.9). FF2 summarised that sites must "quote in turn where they got the information from", explaining their sources, which would allow verification by other researchers.

There were very mixed views on the importance of a domain name or URL in evaluating a source; many participants didn't take much notice (FC3; FF4). FG2 felt it could prove useful along with other information from the site, such as the country (FD2). Likewise FF2 and FF3 used 'gov.uk' to identify official websites, and had more trust in these over commercial enterprises. They preferred domain names which were "easy to recall" (FE1) and descriptive (FF2); similarly FF4 hoped the domain of his website was both "meaningful...and short". This chimes with researchers returning to the resources they remember (5.5). Long URLs

were generally thought to be "useless" (FD1; FF3) and "just about impenetrable" (FD2). This is something to bear in mind for local studies, given that the URLs for local authority web pages can be long and complicated (7.2).

Family historians used both online and offline methods of discovering new research resources. Word of mouth (FA2; FC3) was very common, both between individual independent researchers and informal groups, and through more organised groups, most likely family history societies (FC2; FD2; FG1). FC2 noted that this was "not just oral…because they then put those in their magazines". Similar to this are published family history magazines (FA4; FE2; FF3; FG2); those specifically mentioned were *Ancestors*[175] (Peter Christian's Column in particular), *Family Tree*, *Family History Monthly*, and *Internet Genealogy* (an online magazine). FG2 would likely follow up resources on a magazine's website. Both newspapers (FA1; FG2) and published books (FF5) came with reservations. FA1 suggested that anything picked up by newspapers would be incredibly popular and, citing the *1901 Census* as an example, "you probably can't get on for about 4 or 5 days!" FF5 identified that published books could go out of date almost immediately; however resources which have moved could be traced via search engine.

In terms of purely electronic methods of discovery, following links (FE1;FF1;FG2) was surprisingly not amongst the most popular means, considering the self-confessed trait of many genealogists to go off on tangents (S1, 6.7). Perhaps users are less aware of themselves doing this. Search engines, however, were very popular (FC1, 2, 3; FD1; FE2); FE2 had "formed a habit of 'google-ing' anything I am looking for", leading him to new sites. FF4 used them frequently for discovering overseas resources, which could be "very valuable as you wouldn't find them any other way at all". This could also apply to overseas researchers trying to discover resources in the UK. They were used either with the intention of the discovery of a new resource, or just a specific piece of information. FA3 also tended to "play a lot on the Internet". Mailing lists, particularly those provided by *RootsWeb*, were popular (FC3;FD1), and could yield a wide scope of resources, where they could be shared by electronic 'word-of-mouth'; "there is a lady in Canada who is always putting websites on, saying 'this is interesting, have a look at this'" (FA1). Although similar in content, message

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[175] Published by the National Archives.

boards were only cited once (FA1, 3) as a method of discovery, although discussed widely for other reasons. This is possibly because mailing lists can be passively monitored, whereas searching message boards for new resources is more active. Other electronic sources discussed were online news sites (FD2) and family history blogs (FF3), which could be tracked by RSS feed, such as that of Dick Eastman[176], which can alert researchers to new and prominent material.

Favourites (or bookmarks) were by far the most cited method of navigation to resources (FA1, 3, 4, 5; FD1, 2; FE1); FF3 claimed to maintain over 300. Most users attempted to classify resources into folders, for different aspects of family and local history (FE1, 2; FF2, 3; FG1). As the number of bookmarks grows however, they become difficult to manage (FE1, 2; FF2). Shortcuts on the computer desktop (FC3; FF4) were also used; alongside typing URLs into the address bar (FA2; FC2) which would often bring up the address relatively quickly, or cutting-and-pasting web addresses (FD2; FE1). A perhaps less obvious method (at least on first glance) was to navigate using *Google*. This easily located a site if there was any doubt of its name (S1) or exact URL (S11). "URLs can be so difficult to put in correctly sometimes. These days especially they tend not to be, well, you can get to the front page with a simple web link, but don't often get to **what you want**…so I tend to *Google* it" (FF3). More evidence of "*Google*-navigating" was observed during shadowing sessions, and also references within the diaries. Others followed a mix and match approach (FF2; FG2), varying the route depending on method of discovery. "If I've found it in *Google*...then I'll click on the link. If I find it in a magazine, then I'll type it in" (FF2). How family history researchers discover and navigate to resources is important to local studies. Identifying the channels where researchers are looking can inform local studies marketing strategies.

5.6   *Commercial Information and Resources*

Most participants had a reasoned approach to commercial information, and mostly were "quite willing, within reason" (FG1) to pay for information. "You expect to for a hobby, don't you? Any hobby" (FC3). There was a high level of awareness of the issues involved in its production and the reasons why information cannot always be provided free-of-charge.

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[176] Eastman, D., 2010. *Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter.* [online] Available at: http://blog.eogn.com/ [Accessed 3rd May 2010]

"Someone had to copy it, transcribe/index it and get it on a website, so they should be compensated" (FD1), also noting that sites like *FreeBMD* are only free because the time and transcriptions are volunteered by researchers.

> *I used to get irritated by some of the RootsWeb forums I was on, with all these Americans saying "Why should we have to pay for these things? They should be available to all". But then, who's paying for the work being done? You know, tax payers in Scotland? I think it's only reasonable to pay something.* (FC1).

FA2 took the opposite view to his other group members for a slightly different reason. "It depends on whether I think it should be free or not. The census records were government records; you had to provide it, you weren't given the option, it was supposed to be public record, yet you have to fork out x amount for pay-per-view...I don't think it's right". Others acknowledged his view and recent debates regarding similar resources (such as Ordnance Survey maps), but "the argument that comes back is, there is a cost of digitising, indexing and maintaining" (FA5). FG1 resented "[paying] for info from sites to which I have voluntarily contributed databases such as parish register transcripts without getting a preferential deal as a quid pro quo". Similarly FD1 felt they should be compensated for "constantly" having to send *Ancestry* corrections to their indexes.

Positive aspects of paid-for information were the perception that the quality and reliability of information would be higher (FE2). "If the information's good and there's a good chance that it's been validated in some way…then it's worth the money" (FB2). There was also the aspect of convenience. FA3 felt that even though she had spent a considerable amount on *ScotlandsPeople*, "I don't feel I'm being robbed, because it would cost me 60, 70 pounds in petrol to drive to Edinburgh and back, and that's before accommodation and everything". FB3 compared this to purchasing books from a city-centre bookshop; "it cost me more to go in, on the bus or by car, than it did to order it off the Internet". Users did also need to feel, however, that they were getting value for money. For people who get the use of it (FA1, 4), subscribing to *Ancestry* can be "cost effective, and saves my time" (FD2); "but it's just been successful for me I suppose. If I wasn't getting quality results I would say it was a load of rubbish!!!" (FA4). *ScotlandsPeople* had held credit prices since their launch (FC1), and although FA2 thought *Genes Reunited's* rates were very reasonable, many of his colleagues disagreed with the recent (2007) rate of increase (5.8.4). Conversely, FC2 felt "the worldwide *Ancestry* is quite expensive...one relative that emigrated in 1858 doesn't really make it seem

worth it" (FC2). He had a similar view about commercial sites that "charge you about £100 a year" only offering very limited data.

There was a negative reaction among some to the credits or voucher schemes offered by sites; either *ScotlandsPeople* (Miller 2007), or the pay-as-you-go subscription alternatives of *Ancestry* and *FindMyPast*. The addictive qualities of family history (Fulton 2006, 2009a and others; 6.1, 6.4) can leave users with a "huge bill" (FA2); "once I start [on *ScotlandsPeople*] I have a lot of trouble stopping, and those credits running out doesn't normally stop me. I've seen bank statements where it's just switch switch switch switch switch switch switch!" (FB2). FA1 was also wary of these, after a negative experience with vouchers for the *1901 Census*; "I'm scared of sites that might bring me up about 6 alternatives, and you might have to pay money to go through each of them". FB2 also noted that it was easy, and irritating, to "rack up 30 credits worth" of wrong alternatives.

Advertising of commercial sites did ruffle feathers, although comments were primarily connected with *Ancestry*. Although some detested any advertising on the Internet (FE1; FF3), *Ancestry* advertising certainly appears the most dominant and penetrating. "I get fed up with all roads leading back to *Ancestry*" (S7); and can create a depth of feeling, such as a deep aversion to "Tony Robinson's cheesy face" (S11) when it is populated throughout the web, and also on television. Many found *Ancestry*'s advertising misleading, particularly with regard to "disguised ads" (FE1) on *FreeBMD*; "that *Ancestry* box at the top that says 'enter your ancestor here'. That fools…an awful lot of people who are just starting out" (FA1). Indeed, in 2006, complaints were upheld by the Advertising Standards Authority against *Ancestry* regarding various published and television adverts, for misleading claims regarding their holdings (ASA 2006). However, some accepted this as one aspect of a running commercial entity; "I don't mind people making money; I mean *Ancestry* can be plutocrats for all I care" (FC2), as long as they delivered quality and relevant information.

5.7 Search Engines

Participants held mixed views regarding the use of search engines within research; most were very keen and open, whilst a few used them quite rarely (FB2,FG1). They were useful for discovering the research of others (FA3; FB1; S1); "one day I put that into *Google* in

inverted commas, and a family tree came up with my grandfather at the bottom! It's the only time that's ever happened to me!" (FA3). Although this may perpetuate the myth that 'everything is out there on the Internet' (FA3 noted that this "set high standards" for her Internet research), everyone who recalled a situation such as this (FA3; FB1; S1) was keen to stress that success here was a very rare occurrence, and the information still required verification. Engines could be used to find "things that aren't linked in to anything" (FB1), or for injecting change or new ideas into research (FC3); "If you're at a loose end in a way, or you don't have time to do a lot of research, or you've run out of ideas, just sometimes *Google* will do it for you" (FC2). Searches mostly concerned names and place names; either one-off or regular searches, keeping up-to-date with new material (FD1; FF4). "I have done it with more obscure place names" (FB2), or "random searches on a name" (S5) "just to see what comes up" (FA3). Wider searches were also used. FF1 often performed subject searches, and tried to trace "what sort of records might that person have generated", what they contained, and where they were located. What was evident was that *Google* was the definite search engine of choice for most participants during the research. It also seemed 'google-ing' was now considered the common-sense first port of call for any enquiry.

> I don't know whether it's the people who make enquiry of us perhaps are not very far on with their research, but if somebody says to me "I can't find out about so and so", I immediately put it into Google, and I will come up with some sort of answer, and I'm thinking to myself, these people are using the Internet, they've contacted me by email, THEY could have done that! (FF5)

In a similar vein, the language used by participants when referring to *Google* was very revealing about their attitude towards it. D01 and D23 found information about place names "on *Google*", rather than by using *Google*. Indeed, "*Google* showed that the school was a charity school for military orphans, training them for domestic service" (D22). As Reid (2005b) highlights, "People use *Google* because it is easy and because they perceive that it retrieves effectively and efficiently the information that they require...We might know differently but convincing people of this is not easy". With regard to information literacy, some users gave the impression through their use of language that they almost regard *Google* as an information resource in itself. For example, S8 remarked that: "if I was looking for someone who worked in a Birmingham factory in 1900…I'd be digging out *Google* and seeing what they had instead". What should also be noted is the use of *Google*'s other functions, which may further imply to some that it is a resource in itself. Those reported by diarists

included page-caching (D08); the aforementioned navigation (D11), and maps (D16). Maps were particularly useful for family historians to locate ancestors' addresses when researchers are not overly familiar with the area (D16).

Problems experienced were the volume of results produced (FA2, 4; FB2; FD2), and irrelevant hits within; "either the name isn't recognised, or you get so many hits you think "I'm not looking through that lot!" (FA4). Unusual surnames also produced quirks; "I'm really annoyed with my parents with the surname Must, because it's also a verb. So if you put in "George[177] Must", you get all sorts of things about instructions given to George" (FC2). These difficulties are particularly exacerbated with common or famous names; investigations concerning Smith and Jones would likely not be helped by *Google* (FG2). FB2 observed the problem when he "put Flora MacDonald in as the search criteria and got MILLIONS...I gave up after 20 pages". Strategies used to address this included excluding appropriate words, for example FA1 used the search term –Football, to try and exclude results concerning an unrelated famous footballer with the same name as a research subject. FF2 qualifies a search with "something like family history, local history, genealogy, to try and reduce what you get back," in order to get better results, and find "odd little individual sites which have given me ways into other information". FB1 suggested including terms such as "MIs or gravestone", along with a name. FC2 even enjoyed being inventive, and "trying to find [different] ways of saying it, to bring out the good stuff".

5.8   The "Big Four"

5.8.1   Ancestry

I use Ancestry whatever...It's a horribly flawed system, but has the most overall. (FD1)

I've had an Ancestry subscription now for about a year and that really does help, as before I used to go down to London...it's really revolutionised that. (FA1)

Since *Ancestry.com* went online in 1996, it has become the largest and arguably most popular genealogy web site, now containing "tens of thousands of record databases, family trees, message boards, and genealogy-related articles" (Garrett 2010). According to the site, 25,057,400 members edited family trees; submitted 59,738 family stories; and uploaded

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[177] Forename changed

605,940 photographs in the last week in July 2011. Despite FD1's proviso above, participants held generally positive opinions regarding the site, having both stalwart subscribers who "use it extensively" (FF5), and those "dip in as and when" required (FF1). A number of participants considered it their 'one-stop shop favourite', with much of their required information in the one location (FF2, 3, 5).

> *If you've got a subscription to Ancestry, they've got it all there. So you put the name in, and it comes up with FreeBMD information, it comes up with census information.* (FC2)

For the 16 diarists using *Ancestry* during their sessions, the census returns images (10), and GRO BMD Index (6) were the main interests. In addition, *FreeBMD* (FA2; S4), Pallots Index (D01), biographical information on local people, business histories, directories (FE2); Queen Victoria's descendants (D09), and immigration and emigration records (D30; FA5) were also used. FC3 was highly enthusiastic regarding a local history book and its contents (parish records in particular). *Ancestry*'s continual proactivity in expanding its content is a plus point for many subscribers (FC2, 3; S11; 5.4). A number of family historians were keen on and made use of the message boards (S5; D20; FC3) and Ancestry Community, areas of the site which were free to access. "They're quite useful, mostly surnames. Join up to the message board with that surname, and sometimes you get a hit!" (FC3). But also has "quite a good spread of family trees that people have put on" (FC2). Users maintained an awareness of American bias and user-generated content (S5).

With consistently good content satisfying people most of the time, *Ancestry* does create high expectations for users, which can result in disappointments if these are not fulfilled. "Numerous hits, but nothing at the right time or place for my three Irwin brothers. Very disappointing" (D02); "I tried all three names on *Ancestry.com* and got no results. Another disappointment" (D07). It was also noted that the English BDMs were not complete (D08), which made searches "less than satisfactory". Researchers need to be aware that not everything is online; both in terms of progress through various digitisation projects, but also on incompleteness of the original source materials. Those participating in this research largely showed this awareness. During the course of data collection, *Ancestry* greatly expanded its Scottish resources. Previous to this, Scottish researchers had described the resource as "rubbish" (D08) or "no use if you're just involved with Scotland" (S10).

However, these comments may already have been addressed by the additional resources. Increased coverage in terms of Scottish information was particularly useful (S11, FC2), and was much welcomed by most (FC1, FD1). This has also strengthened use when combining resources (6.6); although it did not provide Scottish images itself, searches could be narrowed on *Ancestry* prior to image retrieval from *ScotlandsPeople* (FE1).

Errors in transcription and indexing were a large bugbear for many *Ancestry* users (D01, 06, 19, 22; FA1; FC2, 3; FD1, 2; FE1, 2). These have crept in owing to human error, but also from lack of local knowledge from overseas transcribers. D01 found "the indexing in *Ancestry* is quite inaccurate, and also on Pallots, where she has been indexed as Sarah Jones, but on the index slip her name was Sarah Collins Jones...but still useful IF you know what you are looking for". Searching also contributed to this. Although some (FC2, FD1) were largely satisfied with *Ancestry*'s search facility, it was not the easiest to use (FD2). Searches often produced "none or many possibilities" (D22), some of which "have nothing to do with your original query" (FC1) American information was returned unnecessarily (FC2). FA2 noted "*Ancestry* didn't give you an awful lot of help deciding" between 2 search results with similar names; FC3 highlighted difficulties in identifying spouses compared to *FreeBMD*. When adapting searches, users found that removing information was often successful; "taking out details I've put in and the person you're looking for crops up. But it seems the more information you put in, the less chance you have of finding them" (FA4). It was found useful to have the flexibility of different online versions of various resources (FA1, FF1, 2; 6.6). The layout and navigation were awkward to use, often just because of its sheer size. "*Ancestry* is so big that it's not always easy to find what you need" (FD1), and "can be time-consuming to use as there is so much info" (FE2). FC2 also noted that "you've got to know what might be there in order to ask for it". People preferred sites with a simpler layout (FF5), and indeed FA2 felt the *Ancestry* version of *FreeBMD's* data "comes up very poorly, in respect of its presentation", in comparison with the simplicity of the original. This is related to the familiarity issue (5.4), and "although it took time to learn, most databases are similar in their search functionality making it much easier to experience new ones" (FE1) when released.

Ancestry (and a number of other subscription sites) often offers free access to some or all resources, often over a holiday weekend (D20, 27; FB1, 2, FC1; S1). These offers allow the occasional user to dip in (FC1), but also encourage familiarity and entice researchers to subscribe fully. These and introductory free trial periods help build up a level of familiarity wanted by researchers; likely a shrewd move on *Ancestry*'s part. "The reason I go for *Ancestry* is that they used to do free trials…that gave me familiarity" (FA1). A subscription also seems to impact on loyalty (FD2, FF3, 4; 5.5), however a researcher is likely to be a regular user already to make it worth taking out a subscription. Those who carry out research or "look-ups" for others (FA1, 4, FF3, 4) find they definitely get their "money's worth" through their use (FA1); "for those purposes *Ancestry* is about 90% of it I should think, because they're at the beginning of their research as often as not" (FF4). There is also direct access to *Ancestry* from various Family Tree software products (D11, FB2), although this can cause confusion for some (S4, 6.9, Table 5.4). A number of participants mentioned being caught out by the end of an *Ancestry* free trial. "I did a 14 day free trial thing and discovered that I'd signed up for a year" (S1). They also operate an automatic renewals policy, and although there is clarity at the beginning of the subscription, this catches out a great many researchers. "*Genes Reunited*: they remind you" (FC3). FD1 felt *Ancestry* had "lousy customer service", and indeed there were no shortage of complaints about their service (Consumeraffairs.com n.d.), despite a high rating from America's Better Business Bureau (BBB 2010).

5.8.2   *FamilySearch*

FamilySearch, provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints was one of the first family history e-resources, and at the cutting-edge when it was first launched in 1999 (Christian n.d.). However, as other resources have developed at a faster rate, family historians have changed allegiance. "Now that *Ancestry* and others have caught up, I'm finding that I use that less. I tend to forget it's there sometimes now, but I did always used to use it" (FF2). It is still heavily used, and as FB3 commented, "it's quite a useful thing". Within the diary study it had more unique users than *Ancestry*, but was accessed less often; largely once or twice per diarist (Table 5.3). Free access does appear to be one of the major plus points for users (D22; S7, 8): "anything pre-1855 I would go to *FamilySearch* first because it's free. It's not complete and it's a bit quirky, but it doesn't cost" (S8). This is especially the

case for use in conjunction with *ScotlandsPeople*, initially focusing searches, prior to retrieving the image (S7; 5.8.3, 6.6).

Within the diary entries, primary usage of the site was the *IGI*. Many participants (S1; FB1; FC3; FE2; FF3) were concerned about the accuracy and inclusion of information submitted to the site by users, which would be included in search results unless screened out. In the focus group and shadowing sessions most participants made a definite distinction between *FamilySearch* itself and the *IGI* as a separate hosted entity.

> *Some people tend to [Search All Sources], but I don't, I tend to use IGI, it's not got so much speculation in it. It's still got some.* (S10)

> *It isn't particularly straightforward and user-friendly, because you've got to know… Unless you click on the IGI thing on the left, you'll get anything and everything! Which might be off-putting to some. (FF5)*
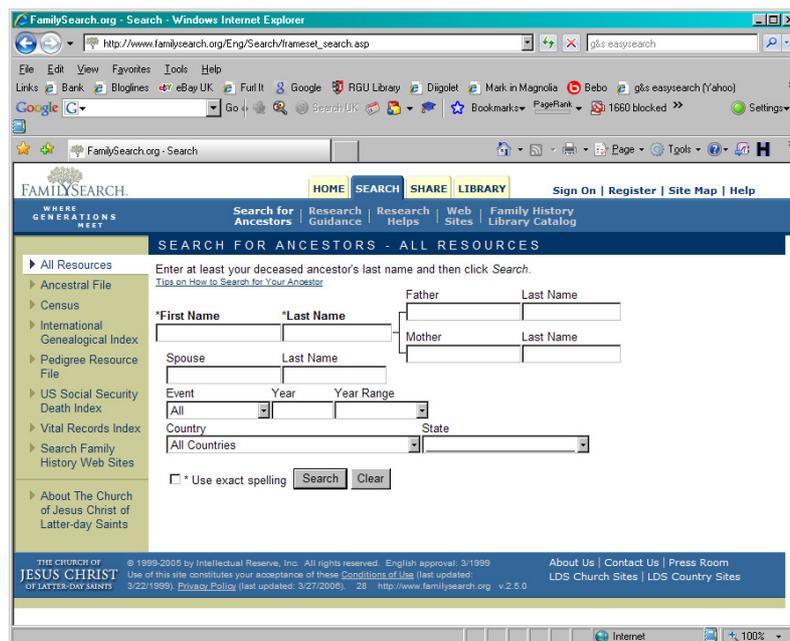
Figure 5.3: FamilySearch Search Page

From 17 unique users, 9 visibly distinguish (in their diary entries) between the *IGI* and All Resources (see side navigation bar in Figure 5.3 above); there were also 2 uses of 1881 census. In addition to the main search (above), there is a quick search facility on the front page which restricts the range of options available, causing some researchers to get confused and lost (FB1). This was the case with S11, who was quite confused whilst searching. She found it very difficult to narrow down options, unaware she was using one search instead of another. S10 noted that the system was "quite funny; it sometimes doesn't give you stuff that's

actually there, and you do a search in a different way and you find it". There is a clear information literacy and user education issue here; users must know what they are searching in, and the search options open to them.S10 further observed that marriage records were not as reliable as other *IGI* content, and S5 that "Scottish records...after 1875" were practically non-existent.

The use of batch numbers (6.6) is a technique or strategy used by participants (FB1, 3; FC1; FF3; S10, 11) to verify that information is from the *IGI*, which has higher accuracy and reliability compared to user-submitted information. These correspond to a particular area/parish's 'batch' of records. "I click on the number, and look at the whole thing, and see what information's in it. If it looks like kosher stuff, then that's fine...OK, so that looks pretty good. I'm happy it's C11-something, so it's from an OPR" (S10). By clicking or searching on a particular batch number, all christenings or marriages from that batch (FB3) will be returned; also adding a surname would return all occurrences of that name within the batch. Although there was a fairly low occurrence (2) in the diary study, it was discussed many times in shadowing and focus groups, illustrating wider awareness of the technique than was demonstrated during the sessions. FF3 matched handwritten transcriptions of OPRs "with the *IGI* film references…And if they were matching, it gave me 90% certainty that they were correct; same names, same dates etc. I matched them up using Hugh Wallis' site, which was very useful". Hugh Wallis' website[178] lists batch numbers and their corresponding parishes; each use of this site in the diary study coincides with one of *FamilySearch*.

There were very mixed comments regarding navigation, ranging from "very easy to use and navigate" (FE2) to "awful" (FF3), or "good instructional information, but totally hidden away!" (FF1). Participants were unanimous regarding the classic issue of American websites slowing down overly when traffic increases (FC2, 3; S1, 6). Problems with indexing and transcriptions persist (D01, 16; FF4), where "there's quite a lot of things that are not on the index, but yet are there in the film" (S10); the consensus blamed both human and technological error. It was also observed:

The other thing about [Surname] is that it can be spelt differently. That's something else I need to check up on. With this I've found that IGI knows only 2 spellings. (S10)

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[178] Wallis, H., 2010. *IGI Batch Numbers - British Isles and North America* [online] Available at: http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~hughwallis/IGIBatchNumbers.htm [Accessed 5 June 2010]

[T]hey didn't know the difference between Sunderland in England and Sutherland in Scotland. A lot of people were credited with having been born in Sunderland; they had to do it again. (LS14)[179]

As discussed, in terms of information and genealogical literacy, participants were largely aware of the flaws of *FamilySearch* and how to counter them, but were themselves aware that not all researchers were. A number of participants had reservations about the LDS Church's provision of data (Little 2008; 4.3, 5.3.2), given that they "produce[d] their records for a different purpose" (FF3); for their "goal" of retrospective baptism into the faith. Where data was submitted by members, trust in the resource decreased (FB1; FC1, 2; FF5). On learning from a colleague that visitors to their Salt Lake City library were required to submit, unverified, up to four generations of ancestors, FC1 noted that he "was always a bit wary after that". There was awareness of their ongoing measures to provide digitisation and indexing solutions (Eastman 2007). "Their objective is to combat *Ancestry* by having it all there free. And more than *Ancestry* has got!" (FF3) At the same time, participants (FF3, 4, 5) were keen to recognise the contribution to e-genealogy made by the church through the *IGI* and *FamilySearch*.

5.8.3   ScotlandsPeople

On ScotlandsPeople: it is a fantastic resource. One hour's work on genealogy and no travel, and I have electronic copies of six pages of census returns. (D28)

As noted in earlier discussions (5.4, 5.6), there was huge enthusiasm for *ScotlandsPeople*. It is very well trusted and reliable, namely because it is the official source for Scottish civil registration and census information, and provides primary data (images of actual records). "There MUST be images. I need to be able to see the data for myself and download it so I can add it to my own files…As far as trusted goes, *ScotlandsPeople* has been the best" (FD1). Within the shadowing study (6.2), this was participants' "first instinct" when looking for "hard facts" (S5) within Scotland. The "comprehensive" collective online availability of Scottish data is "major plus" (FB2). The *Scottish Wills Database*, (formerly *Scottish Documents*) is now included (FB1); a free-to-search database from which wills can be purchased and downloaded (FE2); and most recently images of OPRs (D06). FC1 also enjoyed the additional local descriptions given by census enumerators of their areas.

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[179] LS14 is a Local Studies practitioner that was present during one of the focus groups.

ScotlandsPeople provides a high level of convenience and cost savings, both in terms of time saved, elimination of travel expenses, and ease of use (5.4, 5.5). This meant for FB2, even living in nearby Glasgow, "I don't actually have to go to Edinburgh"; and is "easier than cranking up the films" (FB1). It also provides instant access to searches and information; because the primary data is online, "you can see the records so you know immediately" (S6). FC1 found "*ScotlandsPeople* so much easier to access information" (FC1), or "probably as simple to use as any that I've come across" (FB2). The clarity of the site was highly valued, as were facilities like the Timeline (FB2) and ability to see previous searches and viewed images (S2, FC1) at any time. It is often compared favourably to *Ancestry* in this regard; "*Ancestry*'s good, but *ScotlandsPeople's* better"; "[Y]ou get what you ask for completely...If I did a search for Willy McCann, for a marriage certificate in a certain year...or I can do it for a 10 year gap - it doesn't have to be quarterly, you don't have to go through it by quarters…It'll give me every one, everyone of that name, not the pages" (FC1), being completely indexed.

ScotlandsPeople was used quite heavily in combination with other resources (D06, 7; S7; FD1), as "it helps to focus, and saves money basically" (S7). Researchers would narrow down a search, or obtain details from *FamilySearch* or *Ancestry*, in order to get a quicker and easier search on *ScotlandsPeople* (6.6), and, for example only have to pay to go through 1 page of search results instead of 3. "At this time *Ancestry* doesn't have the rights to show images of Scottish records, so I find the index there and get the image from *ScotlandsPeople*" (FD1). D06 noticed real-time evidence of this in her research. "The first evening was great, few had realised the OPRs were up…However, when word got out, even [*FamilySearch*] crashed!! There must have been so many people out there using it to prepare" (D06). *ScotlandsPeople* is not exempt from the same indexing and transcription issues that affect other sites. "You must know or guess how the names were originally recorded, no room for guesswork. I have found some records mis-transcribed; my ROBERTONS are almost always ROBERTSONS" (FE2). However, D06 found their customer service excellent after having problems with indexing errors, and "teething troubles" around the launch of OPR images. Although it was felt that *ScotlandsPeople* was good value and had kept its charges constant, (FC1), some users felt that a flat rate subscription service similar to *Ancestry* would be preferable for heavy use (5.6), as costs did "mount up" (D06), despite appreciation of its worth.

5.8.4 Genes Reunited

On the plus side, I find Genes Reunited very good at connecting me with second cousins, and taking me all over the world, giving me information on a wider spectrum about people related to me. (FA4)

By far the primary use of *Genes Reunited* was to contact other researchers, both to access previous research others may have already completed (D27), and any primary data or clues they may hold (FD2). In most reported cases (FA4; FB2; FC2, 3; FD2; FF3, 5; D06, 19, 20, 27) this was quite a positive experience. Inevitably, due to the nature of the business, others working on the same "branches" and lines as you will likely be related; so they are in fact, discovering their own family (FA3, 4, 5, FB2; S6).

Although two participants (FA1,FC3) remarked on the recent (2006/7) acquisition of the *1901 Census*, *Genes Reunited* was not really used for the purposes of content immediately provided by the site itself, although "it is another way of possibly accessing information that has already been researched by another person" (D27). A principal element of this non-use is trust in the quality and accuracy of the information (FC1, 3), and several participants harboured a definite scepticism from past experience; [P]eople contact me saying they think we might be related, and I say 'right - prove it and I'll get interested!'" (FB2). Negative aspects of this contact (FB2; FC2; FF3, 5) are largely frustrations with "new" or novice researchers, "who haven't bothered to look at your stuff to see that their Willy was 100 years earlier or 100 years later than yours, so in fact you couldn't possibly be related" (FC2). "Is this person part of your family? No, they're on my tree for a laugh" (FB2). Complaints included a lack of gratitude, and promises of data exchange which are never fulfilled (FF3, 5); "Sometimes they're extremely grateful, some of them don't even reply at all - but it's nice to help people sometimes" (FC2). Equally, these problems could apply to *Ancestry* and similar family tree sites. The points raised here do tend to perpetuate the stereotype of the time-heavy "where's the book on my family" researcher alluded to in the library literature (Howells 2001; Veale 2004a and others; 7.4) who is looking for "instant gratification" (FD1), or "someone else to save them the job" (FC2):

As far as Genes Reunited is concerned, it's the whole lack of rigour. Anyone can just get in touch and claim anything, or put anything on…That irritates me a little! (FC2)

Lack of etiquette also raises issues relating to living people and data security. After sending someone some of her research, FA1 found "he'd put these trees on *Genes Reunited*, including living people, and I thought "this can't be right!", so I wrote to *Genes Reunited*...But they said yes, if he won't take them off, we will". There was also concern regarding "peoples' motivations" (FB1) for using this and similar sites: "this could be a haven for people who haven't got the best of intentions, where people aren't being as careful with information as they might be" (FC2). As implied by D27 above (and others), researchers are constantly checking for new data (6.6). There was also an important element of personal information management in the use of the site, particularly noted amongst the diarists (6.5), and keeping track of their own research online (D06,16). Hot matches, automatically generated messages identifying potential relatives, were a particularly strong point of discussion (generally in a negative context), and seemed to generate a high level of frustration with their inaccuracy/inappropriateness (FA; FB2; FF2, 3, 5). They are sent out when the name and year of birth (FF2, 3) of a relative in your tree match that of another member's, but don't seem to take any other important factors into account, such as the place of birth (FF2) or surnames of interest (FF5).

Although free to search, it was noted, begrudgingly, that paid membership was required to follow-up and contact any of these potential matches (FA4; FB2; FD2). As those participants have been quite open elsewhere about paying for information (including *Ancestry* subscriptions), the problem appears to be quality of information, particularly in light of matching being so hit-or-miss. The frequency of email contact from the site caused frustration; FA5 "seem[ed] to average about 50 hot matches a week" on account of common names in her family[180]. There were also some positive remarks about the service, relating to successful encounters. "I have actually found quite close relatives, like second cousins...when it comes up and says that this person's got 15 people in their tree the same, I think they have to be related to me!" (FA3). This could be linked to success rates on users' favourite sites (5.5). Charges were thought to be reasonable (FA2), but had recently quadrupled. "It's £10 for 6 months now, since ITV bought it. So I've stopped" (FF3). He was not the only participant who was suspicious of motives (FA1; FC2), noting that "they try to get new business by sending you emails saying 'Oh, we think we've found one of your ancestors'.

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[180] The hot matches service does seem to have been improved since the focus groups took place.

And if you've just started, you might actually believe that, and start paying more money than you need to" (FC2). Their customer service was complimented with regard to subscriptions (see *Ancestry*, 5.8.1), reminding researchers prior to an automatically renewal (FC3), illustrating that courtesy is valued by researchers. Few specific comments were made regarding design and functionality. There was a preference for the original presentation of the *1901 Census* (FA1), and a comment that after site updates "you have start all over again learning how to navigate it" (FA4). They also raised one technical issue concerning the following-up of hot matches, where, if a user left the list of matches to contact a potential relative, they would always return to the beginning, not to where they'd left off.

5.9   *Other Engagements with Sources*

Participants interrogated the *National Archives* online for wills (D27), court records (D23), military (FA2; FF1), and maritime (FF1) information. Whilst it was noted that a lot more material was becoming available remotely (FF4), several participants found locating records quite confusing (FA2; D23). It was also used as frequently as a preparatory tool prior to a visit to the Archives (FF1). *A2A* (now part of the *NA*) was used for locating other records; "I don't want to waste time just going to browse, I want to know what I want to look at" (FA5). However, it was "only as good as whoever had contributed up-to-date records to it, which was not always the case" (FF5). Similarly, the *SoG* catalogue (D01, 03; FC3), *WorldCat* (D17, in search of the writings of one of his ancestors) and *Cyndi's List* (D08, 17; FB1)were also important in terms of resource discovery, showing indexes and finding aids are considered incredibly valuable (8.5, 8.7).

FreeBMD was well regarded (5.4), with improvements made to functionality and speed as well as content (D27), and clear simplicity of design (FA2). It had better marriage-matching than *Ancestry* (FA1, FC3, FF3), with references gathered there before ordering certificates from the *GRO* (FA5, FE2). Similarly, FB1 used *FreeCEN*, both due to lack of cost, and coverage of her areas of interest. There was huge admiration for those spending hours maintaining good quality local history websites, such as *A History of Ayrshire Villages* (FC1) and *Harrogate People and Places* (FC2). A number of participants transcribed for *FreeBMD* (FB2, FF1) when they had some time available. Family history societies were well-trusted,

offering well-researched, specialist information for the area (S2). *Family History Online* (now incorporated into *FindMyPast*) tended to unite societies in terms of a collective e-commerce site (D16; FD1). *Aberdeen and North-East Scotland FHS* (D07,12;FB1;S10) was used particularly for its memorial inscriptions (5.3.10); *Bristol and Avon FHS* feature carefully-compiled links on their website, of which researchers can be completely unaware "unless you draw their attention to it" (FF5). This parallels local studies, with researchers not knowing important and useful data is there until exposed to it (8.2).

Lost Cousins, based on the 1881 Census, was less well received, FC2 finding it did nothing for him. FC3 however felt she had quite "a lot of success"; clearly personal success has an impact on how users view resources (5.4). *Old Bailey Online* (FA3; FC2) and *The London Gazette* were both considered useful; FF2 found footage of her great-great-grandfather, a former Mayor of Southampton, on the *Pathé News* site. The *Charles Booth Online Archive* [181] offered "fascinating" and "wonderful" descriptions of period London streets, although was not easy to navigate (FC3). *GENUKI* provided good, in-depth and relevant information on places (FA2; FB3; FF5), but depth varied between areas (FB1), as with *A2A* above. Links were plentiful and of good quality (FA5), but there was a long route to access relevant information. "If you can be persistent enough it is interesting when you get there" (FF5). Again, parallels to local studies can be drawn in both respects (8.5).The *Long Long Trail* was very well run by knowledgeable people (FB1), displaying information "succinctly, clearly, and beautifully laid out" (FF1). Similarly, the *CWGC* provided quality information, and came highly recommended by all who had used it (FA1, 5; FB3; FF2). D08 observed the site was "somewhat limited on occasion by the primary resources it draws upon", showing an awareness of relevant information literacy issues. It is interesting that users are very enthusiastic about historical material; the sort of material that local studies provide.

FindMyPast was used by a number of diarists (D01, 16, 30), but not with the same penetration as *Ancestry*; "I get a little tired of sites like *1837online*[182] and *Origins* etc. all making a bid for my trade" (D06). The resource was dipped into occasionally by others, for example to use different search fields, options and facilities on the census (6.6). A small commercial site used

[181] LSE, 2009. *Charles Booth Online Archive* [online] Available at: http://booth.lse.ac.uk/ [Accessed 13 July 2009]; Sambrook and Donnelly (2006)
[182] Former name for *FindMyPast*, changed to reflect the increased family history content in the site.

by D23 was the *Black Sheep Index*[183]; although FC2 had also used this, he felt it was only useful to establish a person in a particular place and time, but not worth spending any money. This illustrates the importance of success for researchers (5.4); smaller commercial sites will have a smaller potential market, perhaps less likely to be relevant to an individual's research.

University initiatives also proved popular. Cambridge University[184] is considered a suitable custodian for the Earls Cohn Village records (FC3); Leicester University's *Historical Directories* was found to be very useful, but not always user-friendly (FF3). A joint project involving quantitative surnames, UCL and Nottingham[185], provides various analyses of UK surname concentrations during different historical periods (FB3). *RootsWeb* lists, both for surnames and for different localities (FC2, S5), made accessible extensive expertise from other list-members. Similarly, message boards (forums) were used by many (FA1, 2, 3; FB1, 2); *RootsChat* (FB1) and *Talking Scot* (FB2; D20) were the most frequently cited, "helpful with things like handwriting recognition" (FB2). With both lists and forums, the main irritations were found to be with other researchers, both in terms of list in-fighting (FC1,3), and 'inconsiderate' researchers (for example those expecting others to look up commercial records on their behalf; "we ***all*** have to pay to see the censuses!!" (FC1)) with fundamentally different ideas to their own (5.6).

General Internet issues were also raised. FB3 had concerns about the longevity of Internet information: "there are things that I located 4 or 5 years ago that you can't get to now". Users had to be wary of 'domain parks', in which companies or individuals would hijack similar domains to those of well-known resources (e.g. http://www.freecen.com (S8)) and direct visitors to paid advertising instead. This created a similar effect to the *Ancestry* advertising on *FreeBMD*, which some participants thought misleading (5.6). Remembering multiple usernames and passwords for many resources was sometimes problematic. The speed of the Internet was an issue for many; particularly with US-based sites such as *FamilySearch* (D06)

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[183] Formerly http://lightage.demon.co.uk; now Black Sheep Index, 2011. *Black Sheep Index* [online] Available at: http://www.blacksheepindex.co.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[184] University of Cambridge, 2011. *Earls Colne, Essex.* [online] Available at: http://linux02.lib.cam.ac.uk/earlscolne/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[185] http://www.spatial-literacy.org ;now National Trust, 2011. *National Trust Names.* [online] Available at: http://www.nationaltrustnames.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

and *Ancestry* (FC3), but occasionally also with *FreeBMD* (D05). Large files (often images) were prohibitively slow for dial-up connections (FC3; FF1; FG1; S1, 6). It is clearly an expectation of researchers (and information professionals, 5.2) that sites should load quickly with the increasing capacity of broadband connections. "Now that I have high speed I expect the web sites to be speedy too" (FE2), a continuing consideration for resource design despite increased speed and capacity.

5.10   Summary

This chapter has explored the nature of UK family history resources, and how the user population interacts with these. It also presents evaluative criteria for these resources, which consider elements from information, websites, and family history subject knowledge in their overall assessments. Their goal is to be a useable resource for local studies practitioners, increasing awareness and knowledge of the characteristics of these resources, in order to ensure appropriate quality service levels for family historians. The criteria have also been demonstrated by their application to examples of the great variety of resources in use by researchers. Four resources; *Ancestry*, *FamilySearch, ScotlandsPeople*, and *Genes Reunited,* were universally used and discussed more than others. *Google* was also much used for discovery and navigation to resources and information. Participants considered the informational content of resources most important, in addition to the quality and authenticity of sources and records. However, the right quality of content, and repeated success with this, were required for continued use and interaction with a resource. Participants were largely willing "within reason" (FG1) to pay for genealogical or family history information if necessary, and had an understanding of the costs associated with resource creation and maintenance. Moving forward from resources, the next chapter examines users and their research behaviour in more depth.

What a variety of things we do!   (S11)

6.1   Introduction

As discussed in 2.3, family historians have attracted increased research attention in the past ten years, with Duff and Johnston (2003), Yakel (2004), Francis (2004), and Fulton (2006, 2009a, 2009b) amongst the major authors concerned with their information behaviour. As particularly Yakel has commented, family history research is an example of ELIS, although with increased enthusiasm and commitment than perhaps normally present, making it a "serious leisure" pursuit (Stebbins 2009). Authors have also identified the importance of emotion and affect within research (Yakel 2004; Gill 2007; Fulton 2009a); Yakel and Torres (2007) detailed substantial emotional and personal investment in the process. Participants described their research as a trail (D02, 06), even an endless trail (D06), where they hunt (S4) and trawl (D06) around in records looking for ancestors. Fulton (2006)'s participants described detective work, with elements of clues, discoveries, puzzles, bringing about high levels of excitement. Bishop (2003) and Umfleet (2009) both describe mysteries and puzzles; or a treasure hunt (Francis 2004); with researchers addicted to the "thrill of the research process".

> *The thing about doing Family History is the Sherlock Holmes bit...you look at a list of names, and you think 'which one's mine"? Is it likely to be? But that's quite a deductive process. And that's what's so addictive about it.* (S6)

Addictive and obsessional are also common descriptions (Fulton 2009a). FA5 "got really hooked"; S6 noted "it becomes obsessive because there's always somebody you can't find!" FB1 even described getting her "fix" of research. Other descriptive words included drug, thrilling, exciting, and the feeling of Christmas; it is inevitably "really good fun" (FB1), and indeed a "labour of love" (D09). Yakel (2004) suggests "as some questions are answered, more develop as family historians probe deeper and deeper into the lives of their ancestors...and leads to the need to develop more complex search strategies" for a constantly changing search.

This chapter explores the research behaviour and experience of family history researchers seeking UK ancestors. The results presented here offer a detailed examination of the different components of the research process (in terms of actions, strategies and outcomes). Data is drawn largely from the shadowing (S) and diary (D) studies, where direct (3.7.2) and self reported (3.7.3) observation of research sessions took place. Focus group (F) data has been included where appropriate.

6.2   Users and Research

Each researcher has different reasons for pursuing the hobby (Lambert 1996), and likewise the interest and affinity in family history will have been sparked by different reasons. It may have been discovery of new facts about their family (FA5), or following a death or other event: "I'm an only child and I realised I knew very little about my family. Also my married name...we don't know any others, or can't find any others, so I wanted to research that as well" (FA3). A number had childhood interest that had been rekindled:

> I've still got the original notes I made in Sheffield library, on the back of borrowing slips! (FB3)
> I think when I was about 12, I said to my mother one day, is Alan (my brother) the only [Surname] of his generation? And my mother thought so, and she started telling me a bit, and I took down her family tree from her… (FA1)

Typically, interest rose again when changes in lifestyle allowed, such as retirement (FA1, 4; FF3), when researchers had more time to devote to a hobby (6.3). Others became interested when starting their own family (FD1), or more often when children have grown up and left home (FA3; FE1); "I started looking at photographs to divide them up with my siblings, and I just got more and more interested" (FB1). "I've been researching my family history for about 4 years, courtesy of a family bible I found at my mother's house" (FB2).

Both in person and through diary entries, participants revealed insights into the many different things they were looking for in their research. Finding names or families of ancestors, or genealogical outlines were the goals most often discussed (as Cooper (2005) says, looking for "recorded evidence of a person...facts about the person and that person's

relationship(s) with others"). Although, as has been noted (1.1), there has been a definite shift in interest (and terminology), searching for and locating names is still the first step in any research: "what I had been doing is trying to find people first…" (S2); "you keep finding more people that you have to follow up…there is always somebody else, always another little branch" (FF2). This "always somebody else" factor in FF2's case further demonstrates the perpetual nature of research; however, as well as being circular, there also seems to be a constant extension of the tree both further back in time, and outwards. For example, including collateral ancestors[186] (S6), and subsequently following their lines backwards.

> *This family is out of the line from my 3x great grandmother's brother. Although they are not my direct ancestors, I am keen to follow them because most of my own branch died young or it's hard to fill in their lives, while these proliferated...* (D06)

Researchers have gone beyond building the branches of the family tree with names and dates, to constructing foliage and other details: "I found out that her parents weren't married until the oldest one was 2, and she was 8 months pregnant when they got married. And nobody knew….this was never, never, out in the open. Things like that I like to find out…" (S2). There was also clear interest in local, community and social history. FB3 disentangled the 14 families of handloom weavers bearing his surname in his father's village; S6 was keen to establish more of the circumstances of her great-grandfather's drowning in a harbour: "Why did he drown? Did he fall? Did somebody push him? Was there anything in the paper?...that's the whole social history thing as well" (S6). S11 "actually read the war diaries for the days that [two brothers] died. They weren't mentioned by name as casualties, but to read what was written on the days that they died; it was fantastic! Really emotional to see it". House history is another variant which has gained interest in recent years. S8 investigated the history of his rural property, seeking the last dates of "[someone] being born there, someone getting married there, somebody dying there; the last date I can tie a family" to the village as it had then existed.

As implied above, researchers have different informational goals at different times. Some participants were engaged in one-name studies (FD2, D03, S10, 11), perhaps the closest to

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[186] "Collateral ancestor is a legal term referring to a person not in the direct line of ascent, but is of an ancestral family. This is generally taken to mean a brother or sister of an ancestor (hence a "collateral ancestor" is never an ancestor of the subject). Collateral descendant is used to refer to a descendant of the brother or sister of an ancestor". Encyclopaedia of Genealogy, 2011. *Collateral Ancestor* [online] Available at: http://www.eogen.com/CollateralAncestor [Accessed 1 October 2011]

strict genealogy: "what I'm doing on *Ancestry*, is compiling all the names. All the births (some of them I've been able to match up)…all the marriages, and all the deaths. The hatches, matches, and dispatches. But not only Braidwoods, the variant, Broadwood, because it's interchangeable…I'm collecting them all…" (S11). All those interested in name compilations, with the exception of FD2, were also interested in family history and contemporaneously building a complete picture for their own relatives. There was a brief enquiry into DNA genealogy (D06), but generally this was not a concern of researchers at the time of data collection.

6.3   Research Catalysts and Information Needs

A range of information was given by diarists as the reason for instigating a particular session. The most frequent thing they were looking for, unsurprisingly given the discussion above (6.2), was a specific person, or a specific family group. Diarists also looked for names non-specifically (particularly in one-name studies), i.e. anyone of that name in a particular area, or at a particular time. This could be as part of revision of their own research, either following a break from that particular line, or where facts needed to be rechecked following the discovery of new (possibly contradictory) information (D14; S9). Others were inspired by the discovery of a photograph (D02, 30) or other document (D07), or they may have received data from another researcher/family member (D08, 11, 14). They might also investigate family myth, possibly after a specific discussion (D02), or a long-term query that has been in the back of the mind for some time (D14). Researchers may also be responding to a request for help, either from a friend (D14), or, particularly in cases where a family historian has published their own information online, from another genealogist (D12).

Preparation for a future research trip; locating sources for a future session (D27); following-up information gained "offline"[187], e.g. from a holiday, meeting, research trip, or information gathered from gravestones (D06), were all goals for sessions. Researchers might also wish to take advantage of a special offer from a commercial resource (most commonly *Ancestry*) offering a short period free on all (D20), or a specific set of records (D27). They may

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[187] It may be that less 'offline' research now takes place with the increase in online resources.

investigate a new source (either discovered or recommended) (D14, D20), or new data added to an existing source, such as the addition of OPR images to *ScotlandsPeople*.

I have been at it since they went online. The first evening was great: few had realised the OPRs were up. The next day the site was down, but they soon had it up again. Great helpdesk. However, when word got out, even the IGI Family Search site crashed!! There must have been so many people out there using it to prepare. (D06)

D23 had been inspired watching Jeremy Irons on *WDYTYA?* which uncovered new source suggestions. There were also cases of a general "hunt" for information, with researchers "not looking for anything specific" (D14). Table 6.1 below details the frequency these "catalysts" were cited as the motivation for a research session. Note that the figures here do not equal the total number of diary sessions (136), as more than one distinct information need was stated in several cases.

Catalyst	*No. Of Instances*
Specific person/family/names	75
Discovery of photograph/document	10
Research trip preparation (locating sources)	9
Non-specific family/names	9
Request for help from friend	7
Received data from other researcher/family	6
General session	6
Follow up information gained "offline"	5
New source	5
Special offer	4
Verification/revision of research	4
Investigate family myth	3
New data added to source	3
WDYTYA	2
Research for specific significant occasion (e.g. birthday)	1

Table 6.1: Catalysts for a Research Session

It is not surprising that the search for a specific person(s) tops this list, given the discussion above, but perhaps the frequency gap is. Although a researcher may set out looking for a genealogical fact concerning a specific person, this can often open out into a family history enquiry very quickly after the fact is uncovered, widening and encompassing other information needs.

6.4   Research Patterns

What was clear from dialogue with participants (and other private anecdotal discussions) was the fragmented nature that research patterns could follow in terms of frequency. The obsessive element (6.1) of family history research often manifests itself in periods of intense "goings-on", subsequently followed by similar (or longer) episodes of inactivity:

You can tell I'm rusty! I tend to do this quite sporadically, and it's been a while since I've actually done anything. Once you get into it again you tend to get hooked. (S9)

I haven't really looked at it for a while. I find I do it in chunks; I do it avidly for two weeks, and I don't touch it for six. Months...It's addictive though. Once you start, it's addictive. So you can only do it in short chunks. (S2)

Work commitments (D06) and other major events, such as moving house (D28), can cause extended breaks from research, but as the latter noted; "my ancestors haven't been going anywhere". A private source had done extensive research on his own family and those in his local area, but had not revisited it for close to three years. There were also stories of having begun to research years ago (FA1; FB3) and returning recently, with Internet sources often an encouraging factor: "when I first started to do family history, I did it in the 70s in New Register House, and then I never did any for years, and then when this came online I started to do it again" (S6). These extremes were very much reflected in the frequency of the diary entries (Appendix 18). After two sessions fairly close together, D07 subsequently had a gap of 146 days, followed by an extremely intense week which even featured 3 sessions in one day. This may reflect either a researcher's available time, or the inspirational/addictive pull of a line of enquiry.

All but two diarists researched mainly at home, either in a public library (D16) or in their workplace (D23). Only D07 and D20 changed location, moving to a public library and a genealogical group meeting (on a university campus) respectively. This echoes the findings of the survey (4.8) in this regard, and is not surprising since the diarists are a subset of survey respondents, with the majority of researchers bypassing the library. Diarists often toggled between 2 or 3 sites over a long session, and some preferred to stick to "a couple of good sites...there's no point on keeping on just feeding in information when you can just get away with a few sites" (S11). The average number of websites used per session was 4.8, although this ranged from 1 to 11.

The intersection of relevant ancestral details (namely name, date, place and/or event) in genealogical facts (1.4, 5.2) is critically important here, as it demonstrates reframing of searches by genealogists. This was particularly demonstrated in shadowing section A (3.7.3). Researchers, whether consciously or subconsciously, reframed their (or in this case the investigators) search into one for a particular record type:

S1	*OK, so now we're back to this trying to find stuff in England, aren't we...we're saying he dies in 1891?*
KF	*No, he's living in that house in 1891.*
S1	*Aha, so what we're looking for is the census for 1891.*

Especially when seeking names, if researchers know that there are certain places where people, dates, places and events interact or intersect, their search is immediately focused there. "I thought you could maybe do a cross-reference...with the maiden name. What I'm going to do is try and find…see if I can find a marriage" (S9). Table 6.2 details the short queries as presented to participants, and the required information sought:

#	*Query*	*Information Sought*
1	Who did Alexander Innes marry in the parish of Rathven, on 3 January 1813?	Marriage
2	Find a 19th century map of Stoke-upon-Trent.	Map
3	According to the appropriate birth index, in which district was Frederick Soddy born (England, 1877)?	Birth
4	What is the origin of the place name "Bolton"?	Local History
5	On which date in 1873 did George Masson (b. 1805) of Kincardine die?	Death
6	What was the occupation of Peter M. Ross, of 57 Broomsleigh Street, Camden (Hampstead), London in 1891?	Census
7	Locate a photograph of a locomotive or station on the Welsh Highland Railway from before 1950.	Photograph/Local History
8	According to his Testament Dative and Inventory, how much was (The) Robert Burns owed when he died in 1796?	Will

Table 6.2: Shadowing Section A (Short Queries)

S6 further demonstrates this concept in hunting for an ancestor. "Hmm...the one thing I do know about him is that he was a sergeant, so he must have been in the army. Now, the National Archives site has army records, doesn't it?" An ancestor's army record will give their name, date(s) of service, place(s) of service, and with other possible events within this, it could lead onto further information. FF1 further contemplated the records that people might have generated.

Research sessions (diaries and shadowing) were analysed (3.9) in order to attempt to discover patterns within research (examples of sessions are given in Appendix 19). These were categorised into three groups: actions; strategies and outcomes. *Actions* include searching for a genealogical fact (1.6), seeking information, contacting another researcher or repository. These are often similar to researchers' session catalysts/information needs (Table 6.1). *Strategies* are search modifications; adaptations to the search/research based on how it is going. *Outcomes* are the result (and direction) of the (short-term) investigation. These are altogether harder to determine, and not always revealed by diarists. Table 6.3 overleaf lists all the identified patterns; sections 6.5 to 6.7 explore these further with indicative examples and commentary.

6.5   Actions

Actions (as briefly described in 6.4) are the range of search tasks (or information sought) that family history researchers perform online, as identified by the data in the present study. In a way, genealogical research is almost entirely chaining (Ellis 1989a, 1989b); except following ancestors backwards (or indeed forwards) instead of citations and footnotes. Although it could be the intersection of any name, date, place or event, a major component of searching for *genealogical facts* is seeking BMD records. These in a way are an extremely strong "super-genealogical fact", as they encompass all four elements. This can be done as a general BMD search, or separately as births, marriages and deaths, as indicated by D03 and D23:

Incidence of Faichney name and the derivatives in IGI for Perthshire. Intention is to find the most common incidences of this name in Perthshire to try to find a locus, by incidence and oldest entries found, for original location of the name. (D03)

Wanted to get details of deaths to enable me to send off for death certificates for [x and x] Thackrah, and [x and x] Haddock. (D23)

Actions
Search for Genealogical Facts (names): Births; Marriages; Deaths; BMDs; Census (Locate; Track (forwards; backwards))
Search for Local/Social History: Text; Map; Image/Photograph; Place
Search for Instructive Information
Locate Sources: Online; Offline
Contact Source: Order records
Personal Information Management
Communicate with Other Researcher
Research Trip Preparation
Researching for others

Strategies
Combining Sources: Online (Different sources; multiple versions); with Offline research
Narrow/Widen Search: Age/Year Ranges; Name Variations; Soundex; Mass retrieval/Batch retrieval; Place Qualifier
Background knowledge (of family/local history): Naming patterns; Search for people together;
Source knowledge
Evaluate and Verify: Revision; Browsing; Check source for new data; Monitor "brickwalls"

Outcomes
Session Outcome: Information found; Partial/possible information found; Information not found; Serendipitous information found
Projected Enquiry Direction: Continue with enquiry (Specific; Non-specific); No further action; Not stated
Actual Direction: Follow identified steps; Did not follow identified steps; Following previously identified steps; New (tangential?) enquiry

Table 6.3: Categories of Research Behaviour - Actions, Strategies and Outcomes

As mentioned earlier (6.3) these are the major components of the first part of each investigation into an ancestor, whether the eventual goal is genealogical or wider family history. Research with *census* data has been delineated here as it is a unique resource, and ancestors can be located on a single occasion, or tracked through the resources longitudinally (although this is often problematic in itself). D10 tracked a family back in time: "1871 shows aunt in household, born Sanderstead, Surrey; 1861 shows her with husband and four children, husband born Edgam; 1851 shows wife of different name, three children as 1861; wife born Edgam; 1841 found Mary Ann's parents, also in Edgam." Patterns can be subsequently identified if they are present. D14 wished to plot ancestors' addresses from a similar enquiry on a map of London. Census information also provides a genealogical fact pertaining more to family history than it does to pure genealogy, as it can include places and personal life details. Similarly, *local/social history* was of great interest to researchers. "Managed to find a picture of the ship and descriptions of it. It was interesting to follow the family through time with what they did/work and wars (D11). D16 read "some interesting material on Staffordshire/Shropshire villages". This can subsequently feed back into location, other information, or even other ancestors: "Knowing where this family died and seeing on the records where the informants were living helps me to trace other members' marriages. Great!" (D06). Searching for a *map* or an *image* likewise forms part of this: D02 located 4 images in the *National Portrait Gallery* of an ancestor, although unfortunately none were available online.

FF1 also discussed seeking *instructive information*, intimating that his main use of Internet for family history was for "learning about records". "This really has been more of an education day: learning of more of the resources on the web that can prove useful for dead-ends when the usual genealogy tools are not fielding results" (D14); "I read up as much as I could about these records" (D22). Allied to this is *locating records* themselves. D17 spent four sessions hunting for works by a "noted English doctor in the 19th century and great-great-uncle". As well as searching for copies for sale, he consulted *Library and Archives Canada and Library of Congress*, and also *WorldCat* to locate holdings closer to home. The action could relate to online sources and records, not just physical. "I am going to try and find out what information there may be on the Internet specifically for searching about Jewish family history as I'm going to try and find out more about my

husband's side of the family; quite a lot has already been done but I'm wondering if there are any other ways that we can get some information" (D27). There was much discussion in the focus groups about **research trip preparation** (8.5, 8.7), mostly in reference to the *National Archives*, and *National Archives of Scotland*. "This research was carried out specifically to collect as much info prior to a planned trip to WSX record office at Chichester, to vet entries appearing on *IGI* and check that the batch entries for Arundel for Gumbrells are complete. Also to check details of poor law records that could shed light on why this family moved about" (D01). D03 interrogated the OPAC of the *Society of Genealogists*, and D08 checked the "status and location of Renfrewshire poor relief records" prior to visiting.

Researchers also discussed the process of **contacting sources**: a website, repository or organisation; either for guidance, to check the extent of holdings, or to **order records.** These can be both physical (BMD certificates (D05, 23, 30); photocopies; other materials such as photographs ("ordering a copy of the photo from the National Portrait Gallery" (D02)); or digital materials. In three instalments (over 3 sessions), D06 contacted the *NAS* from the Netherlands regarding information around her grandmother's conviction:

> *An email came with permission to release the Granny file! And in less than the statutory 20 working days! Next step was to order and pay for relevant pages to be copied and placed online where I can download and read them. Long live online genealogical sources!...Very worthwhile, giving us an extra address and including a letter in her hand written in prison saying she does not wish to attend the midwives council hearing! Worth the arm and a leg it cost.*

Something the Internet has been particularly effective at facilitating is **communications with other researchers,** enabling a virtual social community. It can spur on and influence the direction of research (6.7). "I've also been able to email the people who added the information and have had a reply. I've now found out about branches of the family in S. Wales and the W. Midlands with the same ancestor in the middle of the C19th" (D27). Communications can be instigated or reactive: D14 sent "pictures/info on the Sleath family" to another researcher, receiving information in return; D08 followed up "a family tree sent to me by a lady who'd spotted a common interest on my *Rootsweb WorldConnect* tree". They can take place either privately, or in a public forum, e.g. by posting on message boards, fora or mailing lists. D19 "posted [a] query asking for help on how to

ascertain the maiden name of ancestor"; and S5 had been contacted by a man "related to my Dad's cousin, the other side of the family, and they hadn't been in touch for about 50 years. I felt a bit like Cilla Black!" S6 also noted "one of the great things about these is that other folk can come back ages after you've posted it - you just never know". D08, having located a researcher with similar connections on a surname register of interests, "received a reply...saying he is also descended from [ancestor] and including a copy of the information on the family he has gathered so far: dozens of names!" Fulton (2009b) observed that mailing lists and fora were seen as extremely effective, allowing researchers to "cast a wide net" seeking potential relatives researching the same lines. She further identified super-information sharers, who could operate individually or as a group, often active on lists or in societies. D11 had such a contact that passed him information each time she visited the GROS, and considered "she is THE most helpful resource". This shows the importance of family historians' social networks and their sharing of information (6.9).

Although not exclusively an online activity, *personal information management* was also observed. Online, this was mainly in terms of *Genes Reunited* (5.8.4): "when I am as certain of my finds as I can be, I plot them all on my GR tree, if only to keep track of them in my mind" (D06); (D16 and 30 also). FB2 and FB3 found "*ScotlandsPeople* "particularly useful, because it's actually not easy to lose something you've looked at, because you can store your searching and go back. And that really is a very sensible facility...you can track your stuff to and fro, and look at what you've looked at before" (FB2). This does not all take place online: the use of genealogical family tree software follows a similar process. FB2 used the programme *Family Tree Maker*, which allowed him to store work in progress, and separate possible relatives where the connection had not yet been proved. D11 and D19 used databases, the former noting that the "process is long. Wish there was an easier way". S10 agreed with the time commitment, but persevered as he was afraid he would lose vital detail within his own handwriting.

Participants also discussed *researching for others*, which can encompass any of the other above actions:

Very pleased with this result, which is for an elderly gentleman who is just starting to trace his family tree. (D08)

Also did a few lookups on Ancestry for people on the Oxsil and Berkshire Rootsweb lists (I make good use of my Ancestry subscription). (D06)

FF3 similarly did "quite a bit these days for other people…when they give my some information I go to *Ancestry* to find out what I can, get a few certificates for them. Then when we've got a few marriages I go on and see if I can get census details for them".

6.6   Strategies

Combining online sources was a common strategy used by participants, and could be facilitated in two ways. D11 found it frustrating having to consult ***different sources***; this is not surprising considering that many participants preferred to stick to certain sources they were familiar with, liking a 'one-stop shop' approach (S4). ***Combining multiple versions*** of the same source (i.e. from a different provider) was a much more common strategy. D01, having followed a lead from the *IGI* to digitised parish registers, discovered extra occupation information about an ancestor, noting "it is crucial to check the source information in order to see the full picture!" Already discussed (5.8.1, 5.8.3) has been the use of one source, e.g. *FamilySearch* or *FreeBMD*, to narrow down searches prior to retrieving an image from *ScotlandsPeople* (S7; D06). Others combined 2 providers' versions of the census, for example with different search options. "Sometimes it's to be able to cross-reference 2 different sources to come up with the missing piece" (FF1) or to access better transcribing (FA1).

Incidences of ***combining with offline research*** were also widely observed. S10 referred to his frequent use of the 1881 census on CD-ROM (although this is electronic, it is technically an offline source). Following a Scottish holiday, D06 had acquired "some Argyll grave inscriptions that I want to check in the BMDs". Repositories can provide access to more recent records not yet available online (FB1); S7 and D08 discussed verifying information on microfilm copies. *Ancestry* (D08 and many others), *Yorkshire BMD* (D23) and *FreeBMD* (D30) were used to find information prior to ordering certificates; D02 used the Internet to locate and purchase books about members of the

family. As so many in the literature have attested, combining with offline research is an absolutely vital strategy, and can often be the only way past a brickwall: "I don't know how much more I can do online; I've hit brick walls, and I think I'm going to have to go to Ireland" (S3). FB2 would gradually compile a list of records/ancestors he could not locate online, and then spend a day in the GROS in Edinburgh. There was a clear awareness amongst participants that online research did not take place in a vacuum, and offline research was still an important component. The enhancement such sources can offer, as D06 notes, "brings the records to life"; and perhaps, indeed, ancestors to life.

Source knowledge is one area where participants demonstrated high levels of information literacy (6.8), knowing quirks, and any gaps of information. S10 discussed his use of *FamilySearch.* "Some people tend to use that [all sources], but I don't; I tend to use [the] *IGI*, it's not got so much speculation in it. It's still got some. I find the easiest way to get all the...records all at once is if you know the batch number", and used a custom search (5.8.2). Similarly S5 and S10 both observed a huge decrease in presence and accuracy of Scottish records on the resource after around 1875, and avoided its use for queries after that time. S6 observed "the '81 census is actually better because at least you can put in where somebody was born. S3 said of *Ancestry*'s search, "sometimes, the more information you put in, it just confuses it". This is one strategy that demonstrates the sophisticated knowledge and understanding of most researchers (1.1, 6.9). The final short query (Table 6.2) tested shadowees' knowledge of *ScotlandsPeople;* the answer lying easily (but not exclusively) within its Famous Scots section. "For the next one, the testament dative of Robert Burns, I would normally go to *ScotlandsPeople* and look at the wills. So, free search...actually, if I remember, this one actually has a bit for famous people. Here we are; Famous Scots" (S5). Similarly S4 searched for this in vain within his preferred resource, *Ancestry*, convinced it contained more information than it did (6.9).

Narrowing or widening searches, such as searching the census in a wider geographical area to catch any confusion over the recording of place names (S3). One method here is adjusting the *age or year range* in the search: "and the surname was Innes, and we want 3rd January 1813, so we'll give him a year's leeway, start in 1812 I think. They did funny things with the dates in those days, so I'll leave it at September and go into 1814, maybe?

Because they tended to round things up" (S3, also S5). S6 took into account the dates the 1871 census was taken to estimate the age range of her ancestor. Different ordering of British and American dates can also affect search outcomes; e.g. FA4 had seen the same birth date recorded in different places as both 2nd September and 9th February. This is another possibility which may need to be taken into account, particularly with resources produced overseas, such as *FamilySearch* and *Ancestry*.

Name variations were also a common tactic*,* as names were commonly known to change, or be recorded wrongly. A family D01 was researching had the surname "Beal or Beale and I found other surname variations including Bele". S8 had Alnachs which later became Alanachs; FA3 had one ancestor whose 5 sons each had a different spelling of the surname. This is one reason why, in one-name studies, researchers (such as S11) gather the variations too. Other elements that could be altered were the *spellings (and use of or inclusion of initials)* of names, as these too were subject to inconsistent recording: "I'll just try it as A, or I'll try it with Alex. One match...ah...he could be Alex" (S3).In a similar vein, researchers have to be aware of possible *mis-transcriptions/indexing errors,* in addition to errors in the original recording. "You've got enough flexibility, without having to provide the whole lot, to look, to try and find the mis-transcriptions by approaching them laterally. Or partial address, or place names can be misread. You soon learn with Lynn, that Ls can end up as Ss and Vs and that kind of thing" (FF2). FB2 noted that ancestors could accidently be indexed by middle name instead of the first name: "So if you're doing a search on John Smith, and it turns out his name was actually James John Smith, you miss him". S4 described some variable indexing he had encountered: "So I've got to see if I can find anyone else Edgerton in that sort of area in 1851 just in case she's in another family. So I'll look up Lavinia. On that she's LEV, on a lot of other things she's LAV. Except for the 1881 where she's Louisa". Similarly, *Soundex* is a search system which retrieves names which, although they may be spelled differently, have similar sounds[188]. "Anyway, let's get on and find this Mary woman. So, if she was born in 1824, I presume she dies after 1825 if she's one of my relatives. Greig…Grieg could be spelled E-I or I-E I've noticed in the past, so we'll use soundex for that" (S2). As discussed earlier

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[188] Surnames are grouped together phonetically, rather than by spelling. *Names are converted into a code or 'key', which consists of the first letter of the name followed by three numbers, determined according to the grouping of the consonants within the name .A* search using soundex will return all surnames with the same code as the original search term. (Archives.gov, 2007).

(6.3?), those involved in one-name studies utilise *mass retrieval* (S11) of a particular surname; more specifically, *batch searching* (S10) on *FamilySearch* (5.8.2).

Relating to background knowledge of a family, *naming patterns* and middle names (D01) could also be helpful: "and her son John, who must have been another one of them - they stuck to the old Scottish way of naming, especially in Fife…The first son is named after the father's father, the second after the mother's father. Third son after the father. And the daughters are the other way round: the mother's mother and all that. So if it's John, son John, it's probably a younger son, the third son...and Alexander would be the first son" (S2)*.* S7 searched for siblings of an ancestor using names already common in the family. Similarly nicknames are useful where there are families with lots of similar names, e.g. tee names[189] (S10). *Searching for people together* is a strategy that can narrow down possibilities of who is who in a large volume of search results. There may be 300 instances of William Smith, but only 4 cases where William is married to Sally (D08,D23): "I prefer looking for married women if that's not a silly thing to say, because they've got 2 names and are easier to cross-reference; you get fewer returns" (S8), which were also more likely to be accurate.

Background knowledge and contextual information are important (Duff and Johnston 2003), and *knowledge of local history/family circumstances* can all contribute new leads in the hunt for further ancestors, as demonstrated here:

> *What does pay off...is just to sit down sometimes and look through, start looking at eye witnesses and where the wedding was, and you start to pick up connections. It can start you off on a new run.* (FC1)
> *Then again, without the online census for Conon Bridge in Ross & Cromarty, I would not have found McCallum brothers visiting their Aunt in Perthshire, or them with their widowed mother in 1851, where her birthplace is given as Amulree, Perthshire.* (D06)

Some participants' families were known to have remained locally, and this helps concentrate a search into a smaller area (S8, 10). Following no sign of a young female ancestor at home in the 1901 Census, S5's knowledge of common work practices in the

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[189] Anderson, D., 2009. *GENUKI Aberdeenshire – Personal Names*. [online] Available at: http://www.urie.demon.co.uk/genuki/ABD/names.html [Accessed 10 July 2009]

area at that time helped her trace Agnes at age 17, working away from home as a servant in an affluent household. Such knowledge can provide extra help in identifying a relative.

Evaluating and verifying information is also very important (5.2, 5.3); and dictates how information fits in to current research. This happens whenever new information is uncovered: "Have been given a family tree for Charles Whalen and Elizabeth Berry spanning 5 generations. Will enter into my database and confirm BDM registrations". (D19). Similarly, D16 "checked and verified info on Shotten family members". S2 searched for ancestors in multiple different ways "just to make sure it is them; you know you've got to not believe it's true, don't just accept things". FC1 did not enter "anything into my tree until I've got the documents. And I just won't put anything else in". Verifying could also occur with research though already confirmed: "seeking more information on the Sandilands family who occupied the property we own in Scotland. The information that I have previously relied upon has been brought into question" (D14). *Browsing* could identify relevant material for future use. *Revision* and re-evaluation of research already done could spark new directions of enquiry. **"**Having hit a brick wall in researching 2 other family branches, I thought to do myself a favour and check what details I hold for my g-g-grandmother" (D10). D27 wanted "to get a feel of the point I have reached on looking into my maternal grandfather's tree "prior to heading back a generation. FD1 and FF4 repeating the same Google search a few months apart, checking for new resources. Researchers also *checked sources for new data*; D11 kept "checking old haunts to see if new data has been added". D16 frequently "checked additions to Staffordshire BMDs"; although on this occasion found "nothing new for me". D09 often checked a family site. D20 also frequently checked relevant *RootsWeb* lists; on this occasion finding a tree and previously unknown information about 2 families of interest. *Genes Reunited* Trees were also frequently checked for possible new connections.

Bishop (2003) described his researchers often referring to "brickwalls", where they were stuck with a particular line of enquiry. *Monitoring "Brickwalls"* could be seen as a combination of Revision and Check source for new data, but "brickwall" is a significant term for researchers. D30 repeatedly had no success locating the marriage and death of a great-aunt; FB2 revisited "all the documents that I have got, and finding names, addresses

and things that I had missed the first time round when I was just starting out, and I've confirmed 10 people I didn't know I had, just lurking. Somebody's brother-in-law on a death certificate or a marriage line". D11 described "making the usual rounds to hunt for Robert...following lead from Australian cousin on location of more steelworkers mentioned". Brickwalls frequently caused a great deal of frustration (6.7, 6.8): "No… I'm stuck with that one. I've no idea where to go with that" (S1). Often researchers took a short break from these problems, returning with a different strategy.

6.7   Outcomes and Research Directions

Outcomes and research directions are less concrete than actions and strategies, and not absolutely defined. They are extremely personal to individual researchers and more difficult to code accurately, as they rely on the diarists stating their results to a particular level of specificity. As discussed in 6.4, they are reflecting on their session, considering how they think they will move forward with their research. They fall into three sections: firstly, their assessment of whether or not they had achieved their goals, satisfying their information needs, and are illustrated below:

Information found:

Very successful session! Tracked father Robert Mines from 1861 to 1891 census (with all in between) and Lucy from 1881 to 1901 census. These gave me lots of family details and interesting location information. (D22)

1841 Census: Frances and Tenterden with children William, Anne, and Jane. At this time (1841) William (Snr) possibly in Maidstone as a painter (not confirmed)...Frances dies September 1852. William (Jnr) married Clara (no children) and lived in Tenterden all his life. This presented a detailed picture of William Farley and his first family in England. (D24)

Partial/possible information found:

...but need confirmation. Will have to try elsewhere to confirm. (D20)

One born on 10 Jul 1760 in Saint Cyrus, Kincardine with father John is possible as Robert's eldest son is called John. However, there is no other link to go on. (D22)

Wonder if this could be him? Need to explore if I can get prison records to look at. (D23)

Information NOT found:

> *No records for Rouaman or Sarah Rose which match any of my information. This is useful negative information. I'll have to search again after checking the original 1871 census form.* (D22)

> *The minor records in ScotlandsPeople didn't have the name of Gavin's son who was b. Egypt, presumably while Gavin was there with the Cameron Highlanders. Nor was I able to identify any further resources that might give more details of this birth.* (D08)

In addition to these reflections on the results of their planned enquiries, ***serendipitous information*** could be found whilst either not looking for anything, or seeking information entirely unrelated. D14, although finding nothing of what he was specifically seeking, "found a great site for a part of my husband's family in Manitoba and back to Europe". D11, although he did not find a particular ancestor "listed...in *Ancestry* to Boston...did find Gavin Douglas and wife going to Cincinnati, Ohio. Score!!!!" FB3 noted "it's amazing what I can find without looking for it!" When discovering interesting or unexpected information, this can often take researchers off on a tangent (6.9, below). Although perhaps more referred to within physical records, serendipity is still present and important in e-family history research. This shows the importance browsing still has in research: "I don't mind having a wiggly-woggly path, you know, if I'm looking for something, I don't find, but I might see something else. I'm more sort of time rich and cash poor at the moment, but looking round and finding things by accident as well" (FB1).

Following their reflections above, some diarists indicated the ***next steps*** to be taken in their research; this can only be partly assessed since not all participants provided this information consistently. Indications could be to: continue with this enquiry (with either specific or non-specific actions); take no further action: "Lists a William Masson, Son, as witness on Ann's [death] certificate. I can't find William's birth, but did find a brother Robert Masson born 9 July 1897. Research went well. No more research on this branch (D12)"; or not stated. D14 found his "Alexanders just vanished. No help here. And when I was recently in Scotland I went to the Kirkliston Cemetery and no help there...", however gave no indication of the direction of his next steps.

When relevant information was given, researchers' **subsequent direction** could likewise be traced in four ways: following their identified next steps; NOT follow their identified next steps; follow steps identified from a previous session; or pursue an apparently tangential or distinctly new enquiry. These diary sessions cannot fully identify this, only having taken a snapshot of the research process; something appearing tangential may have in fact have been identified as a future line of enquiry. Plus, only an individual researcher can absolutely make that judgement (Dervin 1992). However, from those identified here, researchers followed a predominantly different direction in a new session. Some participants described themselves as going off on tangents, or "easily led astray" (S9), which is related to the latter option here: "One of the things I find really fascinating about this is that it sometimes takes you off on little tangents. I found 1 relative in, it was the death record, and every other death, it was down in Dumfries somewhere, my father-in-law's family, and there was obviously a smallpox epidemic, as everyone on the page, the three entries on the page, had all died of smallpox. Another one where every entry on the page was illegitimate" (S8). S9 frequently found herself doing this: "you have to be quite strict and quite organised. I think, I'm going to do this branch today, and before you know it you've got waylaid" with other areas of the family.

6.8   *Affective Elements*

Feelings associated with finding information were generally positive; firstly delight and excitement, finding much more information than expected (D01), or confirming relationships that had been difficult to prove (D02).

Found Matthew in the 1871 Census: yippee! (D02)

That's an "L". Lavinia. She's 13. And Elizabeth Edgerton; it's amazing to find this! (S4)

I was very excited to find a record in the burial index. (D16)

This was heightened when a large jump is achieved on discovering (or confirming) one missing link (D27), or allowing a result to focus the next direction of research. Excitement was often teamed with surprise; for example D01 initially discovered ancestor James as a labourer in 1841, however by 1881, he owned a significantly-sized farm. D09 was surprised to find her Aunt Louie was actually born Louisa. There is also surprise when unknown relatives are discovered when on research missions (S1), or other trips:

We were sitting on a wall saying there's the house, they've done that to it, they've put new windows in, they've put on an extension, things that were different about the place…So we knocked on the door and this chap came, and I said "I'm just showing my daughter where I used to come and stay with my Nan when I was a little girl". He said "what was your Nan's name?"…And he looked at me and he said "She was my Nan too!"...And the hairs on the back of my neck went! (S3)

Feelings of satisfaction occur when a discovery "instantly eliminates the hours of futile frustration" (D14), or solves an "enigma" (D01); or even if no huge discoveries have been made but the investigations are progressing along (D10, 11). "I've got a lot of collateral information on the two main people I was researching, though nothing earth-shattering. On balance, a good hour's work" (D28). D09 described "a labour of love for William. Luckily an unusual surname. 76 pages, plus some "fiddling" when page wouldn't read (approx. 5 times). Question answered! Considering this: say 85 pages in 2 hrs 25 minutes=145 minutes. 1.7 minutes/page. I'll read GRO pages for the Olympics". Wariness often occurred where, after some positive promising results, researchers are far from a certain conclusion. "Happy with result so far but important to realise *IGI* is only a guide". (D03). Researchers also described not really stopping after a find, just carrying straight on to the next problem.

Emotions can turn negative when the surprise discoveries jar with views and expectations of the family, or the current day values of the researcher.

What does this mean??? I can't believe in bigamy, not because I think they were so innocent, but because I have a marriage record and I can't believe they would have been married in church if he had a wife not 20 miles away! A girl in every harbour? That would have been known. OK so they didn't have email, but rumours spread fast. Weird. (D06)

In general satisfied with research results...Not happy with UVF result as happy to be associated with such relations in the past but not present so will not follow up. (D03)

Also found out about 'infamous' relative: it's true that you have to be prepared to discovered uncomfortable facts about your family when you start looking into your own family history! (D27)

With non-finding of information, there was disappointment to various degrees. "I tried all three names on Ancestry.com and got no results. Another disappointment" (D07); "a not too result filled session, but the fun's in the doing thereof!" (D09). S1 was annoyed she couldn't locate a map during the shadowing exercise. They also exhibited frustration; at

brickwalls and other lack of progress. "Elizabeth…is the right age to be James' aunt and she was born out of the Hamilton area; unfortunately it [doesn't] tell me where!" (D11). S9 found "this bit really frustrating when you just can't get anything"; "None of them are the right part of the world either, unless…it's very frustrating" (S1). These frustrations also occur with sources themselves: **"**The resources are good to use but of course one also feels uncertain when the information is not found…Typical searches produce none or many possibilities and I have no way of working out what to order" (D22). They were especially frustrated by obvious errors: "It's frustrating when a record says 'married about 1571, died about 1566'! A five-year post-death wedding party must have been rather dreary" (D14). This may be especially frustrating in a so near, so far, way.

Despite search disappointments, researchers continually demonstrate a great deal of perseverance: "Nothing on birth and not much on death. I found her son's death cert and it lists Helen as dead before 28 Jan 1858. Nothing on the 1851 Census. Nothing on the MIs. Helen is my 4th Great Grandmother so I'll keep looking" (D12). D22 similarly vowed to continue after finding no matches for members of the Rose family. In one instance D08 found "No positive results at all! It could be that (a) they weren't born in England, or (b) they were registered under a name other than their father's. I will try searching Scottish records as I remember going to see the elder of the two when she was a baby, and I was about six, in Glasgow". S5 couldn't find a particular ancestor, suspecting she had lived beyond 1955 (cut-off at that time), and resolved to check later records at the GROS in Edinburgh. However, this can be done repeatedly without success (brickwalls): "She has disappeared! Maybe been kidnapped by aliens or something. OK, it does happen sometimes. People just aren't there" (S8). As described above (6.5), however, researchers rarely give up permanently, and continue to monitor any changes in the situation.

6.9   Other Characteristics

Examining the range of behaviours detailed above, on the whole participants did display quite a high level of information literacy, particularly with regard to the strategies employed within their searches. Consistent application of existing knowledge was particularly prevalent in the shadowing exercise (which set both Scottish and English

queries), where many were unfamiliar having only tackled Scottish research[190]. However, this is also where it was most likely to be observable (S5). "Frederick Soddy, England, 1877. I haven't done much English stuff. I'm trying to think who I'd do to...erm, *1837online;* is that the one that's got everything on it?" (S8). FE1 felt, although considering *Ancestry* may intimidate beginners, the consistency of their databases made it much easier to adapt to new ones (also FF3, 4). What was also interesting was that as some of the shadowing sessions progressed, shadowees could transfer search knowledge from earlier experience in their session into future searches for photographs (S11); maps (S2); and for elements of their own research:

> *Somebody said to me one day, his name's Harry...somebody said to me one day that they'd put his name into Google...maybe I should put William Adams into Google, maybe I'll just try that then!* (S1)

Participants also 'stashed' information away for later use, which contributes to their background knowledge (6.6). S3 recalled information from childhood museum visits: "it's actually little bits of knowledge like that are stowed away that give you ideas about where to find things and you can cut out an awful lot of searching sometimes". In terms of resources, FE2 resolved to remember 2 sites, "and may recommend them to others if I learn of someone with interests in these geographical locations". FE1 always investigated "links on other websites. I'm always looking for something I haven't uncovered yet that will come in handy someday"; keeping a record in his 'favourites' folder.

Researchers displayed deductive reasoning abilities, often connected with the reframing of searches (6.4). D02 establishes a timeframe of a particular ancestor by the type (in this case 'Ambrotype') of photograph. "Now. Then. He dies in Scotland, didn't he? So we need to go back…" (S1). They also often look for events that were likely to have occurred in an ancestor's life. "If it got to that point, I'd probably think that maybe she didn't marry, she maybe died. But then I'd maybe look in the 1901 census, to see if she was still alive in 1901" (S5); "What I've been doing is picking somebody, and go back with the Scottish records and try and find them. And once you know that they're married to somebody, that gives you something else to look at" (S2). S10 also speculatively looked

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[190] The interesting exception to this was S3, who had concentrated on English relatives, as another member of the family had extensively investigated their Scottish Roots.

for marriages. As discussed earlier, FF1 looks for likely records people may have generated during their life.

There were elements of participants' research behaviour that were not as information literate. Some could display a little lack of awareness, especially moving between sites. S1 took some time to realise that she had left a council website by following a link to *FamilySearch* (which also occurred with S10), and often did not really examine her search results. S4 was the weakest in this respect. Through most of the short queries, the only resource he tried to use (especially in the first instance) was *Ancestry*. "Find a 19th Century map: I haven't a clue! I haven't looked at maps before. Although I did see a site with maps of before...I've got a feeling *Ancestry.com* has map lists in it, so...I have a feeling that they do. *Ancestry*. That's family trees...See what they've got to offer". He doggedly dug his heels in, believing the information would be there if he searched long enough.

There was a noticeable difference in confidence level in their computing capability between some of the older and (albeit slightly) younger participants, particularly amongst the shadowees, where it was likely to be most observable.

I tend to go too fast. I always do that and I'm bad. Especially at my age...I'm maybe too impatient. (S1)

I'm not terrible good on the old computer...I can use it for what I'm interested in, that's all I want to do. (S3)

I don't know how to find my way around a computer most of the time! I sit there and I look at it and scratch my head and go by it 3 times, and then see "oh that's where it is"! (S4)

As previously discussed (4.5), there was a lack of awareness of family history research in other areas of the UK. S10 immediately 'retreated' "back to *Google*. Like I say, I don't do England"; others also found this a struggle (S7) and confusing (S2). Saying this, however, in attempting the unfamiliar research problems, they applied existing knowledge in trying to solve the problem (6.6), although it was "a bit like driving someone else's car!" (S3), and all shadowees made a reasonably successful attempt. Scottish participants were keen to highlight the perceived greater ease of Scottish research, utilising *ScotlandsPeople* (5.8.3), in comparison with seeking information for the rest of the UK. The advantage is

not only the availability of certificates and other online information (S10), but also the greater depth of information contained within.

> *That's what I find so frustrating about English records...Scottish women never give up their [maiden] name in every legal document...And that would be on children's birth certificates, death certificates, EVERYTHING going right back to the actual start of civil registration, so you've always got that link.* (FC1)

There were several incidences where participants could remember the existence of a site, but not necessarily its name or URL. S1 searched for the "scotgov website", meaning *ScotlandsPeople*, but couldn't remember the name; S8 and S10 had similar experiences. "Right, I can do this nice and easily at home...I can't remember the website! What's the Mormon one?...You can tell I don't type these addresses very often - I'm a great believer in favourites" (S8). S11 could recall the first part of the domain names of *Old Maps* and *ScotlandsPeople*, but not the extension[191]. This is not unexpected given researchers' use of favourites and Google for navigation (5.5).

One thing that was striking about conversations held with the shadowing participants (and to an extent the focus group members) was their consistent attempts to 'personalise places'; trying to establish a personal connection with places they discussed or (virtually) encountered.

> *My daughter stayed in Staffordshire for 3 years.* (S1)
>
> *I should know this because my 4th cousin stays in Bolton.* (S11)
>
> *This is Perthshire? Yes. Thomas Livingston was living in Perthshire. Or he was born in Perthshire, and went to live in Henley-on-Thames. He was on a farm in Perthshire, and I visited his grave 2 weeks ago. His father was Alexander...* (S4)
>
> *I haven't got any family in Stoke-upon-Trent so I don't know much about it.* (S8)

Participants had a very enthusiastic relationship with their ancestors (and indeed their research), and were always keen to tell stories. They displayed much excitement as detailed above (6.8). D02 was "very pleased at the prospect of "seeing" J Bloomer!" FA4 was fascinated by his grandfather's army career: "But he died when I was about 1, so I don't remember him; I would love to have known him". S1 related a long-borne story "in

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[191] In this case .co.uk/.gov.uk

my family about...one of my...great-grandfathers...they were all blacksmiths for generations. And he'd come in to Aberdeen, from Maud, actually, one Friday morning, as he did every Friday morning for some reason, market or something like that, and was never seen again". One of the previous purposes of genealogy was to prove a connection to royalty or an important family. Although this is clearly no longer the case for the majority of researchers, it still occurs:

> *They go in for all the local family stories like great-great-grandfather was illegitimate and it was the laird of the manor and all that stuff. It's always somebody rich that they think they can get their hooks into. And they don't like me because I keep writing to them and telling them that they're all coal miners!* (S4)

However, there is still excitement when a connection to an eminent or famous ancestor is uncovered: amongst those revealed in the present study were Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall (D01); a professor at Liverpool University (S10); author Alastair MacLean (D06); and John Broadwood "of piano[192] fame..." (S11). Some were very keen to seek out controversial and more interesting relatives and stories:

> *Here's my granny...she's that wee bitty older than him… He came through from Glasgow - I think I've found his family in the 1841 census. He was a carter in the 1841 census, and a Canalboatman in the 1851 census. At Bainsford. So my granny would not have liked that!* (S11)

> *My mother always said her name and her granny's name was Ellis. My mother was lying through her teeth because her name was Toddington.* (S4)

> *So these 2 couldn't have been married…Nice one! Wait till I tell my mother; she'll hate that!* (S2)

This is an interesting contrast with that shown above, where researchers can be quite negatively affected (6.8). Participants were actively on the hunt for spotting possible relations: a number of shadowees particularly reacted to the first query: "That's him there, Mary Thompson. Oh, could be my relative" (S11); "I might be related to him if he's from Rathven!" (S8); "My mother's grandfather was an Innes from that part of the world". (S1). While researching, they would often speak to their ancestors, almost as if they had a physical presence: "And he's not here...I can't find him...where is he...he's in here

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[192] John Broadwood & Sons is a London-based (now Kent) piano manufacturer: preferred maker to Ludwig Van Beethoven, and an instrument of whose is owned by the investigator. Interestingly, the archives of the Broadwood Company are held and made available at Surrey History Centre: Surrey County Council, 2009. *Surrey History Centre* [online] Available at: http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/SCCWebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTF/John+Broadwood+and+Sons+Pia no+Manufacturers?opendocument [Accessed 26 October 2009]

somewhere…" (S1); "Oh Joan; come on, speak to me!" (S11); "OK, let's see what we can do Lavinia". (S4). Interactions with, and relationships with, other researchers can be both positive and negative, as discussed in relation to the website Genes Reunited (5.8.4):

I see that same sort of thing on mailing lists: when people ask a question "where is a certain place?" and you think, have you not even just put that into Google just to see if you get anything?!!! (FF2)

I get a lot of them in these Friday afternoon session where people can't find things; "there's nothing there", and within 2 minutes I've produced it! And, well it does my reputation no harm! (FF4)

Interactions with other researchers can be both productive and positive. "We've been emailing each other and sending each other our bits and pieces. They were across here 2 years ago! It's a very small world this" (S1); "I've got a friend...she's got a seat at New Register House, and she sends me transcriptions...it's just not using the Internet to find things yourself, it's using it as a communication vehicle". (S10). A competitive element can easily develop between researchers when it comes to sharing information and research outputs: "though it was interesting to note that I'm probably further in my research than he is" (D06). "It's quite nice...because in Canada I am quite sure they don't have that piece of information. So that will be something to send with their Christmas card" (S4). Again this can be related to the previous discussions (above, 5.8.4). On some occasions some, but not all, information was shared:

I've come across a couple of people who get absolutely spitting mad about people putting on what they've done all the hard work to accumulate. (FC2)

Anyway, there's the molecatcher...I haven't left on what he left...I took that off. I was sharing this with one other person, and she put it out to all and sundry, and I wasn't too happy about that. But I hadn't put in here how much he'd left. (S11)

This show information is unlikely to continue to be shared unless the sharing is reciprocated.

6.10   Summary

This chapter has explored the differing elements researchers are seeking to discover, their information needs and research patterns. Family historian research behaviour can be categorised in terms of actions, strategies and outcomes, although the former two

categories are the most concrete. It has also reported a new depth of specific categories not previously explored, that both give insight into the research process, and also give indications to instructional librarians as to strategies to recommend. Family historians are highly committed to their research, with needs that are both informational and affective. There appears to be a high emotional connection to research. They also have a generally high level of information literacy (6.9).

The final strand of the present research deals with e-local studies, and how the knowledge gained so far can be utilised to their gain in the promotion of these resources. Chapter 7 thus first must explore the current state of e-local studies provision in the UK.

I use the word "Heritage" as I feel local studies and family history are closely tied. I feel the notion of "people" and "place" are very strong. In a way, you can't have one without the other. (LS8)

We need to provide as many physical resources as we can; as much expertise as we can muster; access to commercially produced on-line information and to make our own unique information holdings available on line. (LS4)

7.1   Introduction

Having explored the characteristics and interplay of users and resources, we arrive at the final strand, e-local studies. This final strand is as significant as the others in terms of practical applications and outcome-related contribution to knowledge from the investigation. From examination of the ground covered so far, how far have local studies penetrated into the user investigation? The answer is, unfortunately, not very far. "Local", in-person physical use was keenly mentioned in several focus groups (FA; FB; FF (8.2)) and again by many of those shadowed. However, in terms of online encounters, with which this research is concerned, there were very few: Renfrewshire Local Studies (D08), York Archives and Local History (D23), and Moray's *Libindx* (FB1)[193], and although not specifically local studies, D01 used the website of the West Sussex Record Office. Although these were all considered in a favourable manner, this is a very low incidence within the near 150 research sessions reported or observed, and from initial dialogue with focus group members. This further highlights a lack of visibility or penetration of e-local studies. Does this also indicate that local studies, although still present, is a far less significant factor in family history research now than in the past?

As earlier discussed (1.3), local studies exists to preserve and make available historical and contemporary aspects of a community (Dewe 2002b), giving "background and context" to investigations (Reid 2003). The shift in researcher goals in recent times from genealogy to family history (Reid 2003 and others), and even to personal heritage (Barratt 2009) making local studies potentially even more important, providing access to more detailed information

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[193] Moray's *Libindx* was also used by one of the informant observations used in the design of the diary study.

not available at a national or international level. In this chapter we consider the contemporary (2007/2008) state of local studies e-provision, through both the researcher-led benchmarking study, and email interviews with local studies practitioners (3.8).

7.2 Collections

As explored in 3.8, practitioners from 13 local authority Local Studies Services (Appendix 12) were interviewed by email in early 2008. Within the benchmarking study, a total of 203 local authorities (LAs) were examined from England, Scotland and Wales[194], between December 2007 and February 2008. The website content of organisations is a part of the study that will date quickly; e.g. Hull Local Studies has since moved into Hull History Centre with other heritage services, and now has an externally-hosted site[195] in addition to those pages on the LA site. In cases where a local studies home page (LSHP) was not established or a particular piece of information was undetermined, the total of responses may not always equal 203. Percentages given are calculated from the total of recorded datum for that particular benchmark item (not the overall total).

Amongst interviewees, structure and terminology of local studies services were very mixed. Local Studies was the most common service name (5); with Archives and Local Studies (3); Archives (2); Archives and Special Collections; Local History and Archives; and Heritage also in use. Ten of the thirteen services sat within libraries in the LA structure. There were representatives of both joint/amalgamated and single services, although single services often had "strong working links" with related departments (LS10), such as the record office (LS6). Responses also indicated there was often movement within LA structures: from the Library to Heritage service (LS1); or combining services to create Archives and Local Studies (LS13). LS7's department had gone through numerous changes.

In the early 1980s when I joined Local Studies Archives was part of the Clerks Department and when a new Record Office was built there was no political will to bring the 2 arms of the service together. The effects of this are still with us today. Archives, museums and libraries all had an unhappy, underfunded spell in Education (late 80s, early 90s) followed by a separate library Dept

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[194] Following preliminary and relatively unsuccessful investigations during the shadowing exercise, the five Education and Libraries Boards from Northern Ireland were not included in the benchmarking study. The differing authority set-up was not easily comparable with other regions of the UK, and the preliminary investigations had uncovered a distinct lack of online Local Studies content. See section 3.8.

[195] Hull History Centre, 2009. *Hull History Centre* [online] Available at: http://www.hullhistorycentre.org.uk [Accessed 3 November 2009]

being set up again, then becoming Libraries Archives & Arts then taking back museums as Libraries and Heritage before our present form.

LS10 felt that their service would ideally combine with other council heritage services: "there are great overlaps in the service we...provide and there is the potential to offer an amalgamated resource". LS3's Archives and Local Studies sat within Heritage, itself falling under Libraries; they maintained responsibility for LS materials in Libraries, although a different branch of the management structure. This was also the case for LS9, where Local Studies was again outside Libraries, "incorporated as part of the museum and archive collections team". Their service participated in an authority-wide Community History Group, which also involved local organisations from the community.

These service names were largely reflective of those observed during benchmarking (Appendix 20); Local Studies (84) is again significantly the most frequent, with the related Local Studies and Archives (11) also prominent. Others prominently in use were: Local History (25), Local and Family History (12); Local History and Archives (4); Archives and Local Studies (11); Archives (9); Archives and Local History (4); Heritage (11); Community History (4); and Record Office and Local Studies (2). This range of services designations is further illustrated in Figure 7.1 overleaf, showing the approximate ratios of names found in the benchmarking study. Local Studies is most dominant, appearing in over half of services' titles. Although the titles are all related, the numerous variations are probably confusing for first-time and less confident users (8.4). The range of linked terms that could easily lead to relevant information was equally diverse. Those used included: Archives; Archives and Local Studies; Archives and Local History; Library; Local History Unit; Heritage; Local Studies; Local History; Record Office; Museum; Research; Family History; Local and Family History; History, and Reference and Information. Although most services (116, 57%) used one term consistently, a large proportion used 2 (72, 36%), 3 (11, 6%) or even 4 (2, 1%). The terms most commonly combined or used interchangeably were Local History, Local Studies, History, Heritage, and Archives. This use of multiple terms can be confusing for users (8.4), and does not immediately lend itself to straightforward resource discovery or a collective local studies marketing exercise.

Figure 7.1: Word Cloud of Local Studies Service Names

Bearing in mind the traditional roles (1.3, 7.1) of local studies (Carter 1973; Dewe 2002a; Reid 2003 and others), how do practitioners see their role respect of assisting family historians, both locally and remotely? The dominant aspects which penetrated practitioners' responses are those of information provider, and of a guide or interpreter to that information. Local studies should "mak[e] material available to all" (LS1), whether local, remote, and for whatever purpose. LS7 aimed to "provide materials, conserve and make them available, in libraries and where possible on-line". LS3 also felt they should "offer access to subscription sites such as *Ancestry*" and other relevant online materials; this however will have licensing issues, and may not be practical remotely. The idea of being a supportive guide to research and information perhaps presents a more informal, accessible and collaborative face to users than the traditional terminology of user education and other outreach work. Indeed they are perhaps formal and informal faces of the same role. LS12 felt local studies should offer users "tutorials and troubleshooting", using their "trained team" to "guide users through the maze of formats", where differing formats of a record can answer different research questions. There should also be guidance on both record use and interpretation (LS6), and search strategies (LS11). LS9 provided compiled family history packs containing guidance on starting research, common sources, and resources within the collection, similar to education packs (Blizzard 1987; Smith 2007). LS3 noted the important of "taster sessions" and further courses on research and related subjects, as well as outreach work talking to and fostering links with family history societies and other community organisations (7.6); that can in turn create indexes to relevant local studies material.

With regard to further support to remote users, practitioners were largely agreed on their role, which differed very little from above. Users should be encouraged to visit the collection, but that is "not always possible" (LS1); so practitioners should "make research possible for remote users" (LS7), and be "as helpful as possible" (LS13). While the overwhelming feeling was that remote paid research services should be available, not all had the available resources to provide one. LS2, 3, 11, and 13 provided such services for users: "we hold to the trad[itional] view that we don't consult records for researchers, but when it's known a quick look will reveal if there is anything to be found then we are happy to do so. Researchers must visit to undertake extensive research or commission our remote copy or paid research

service" (LS11). LS6 and 9 did not offer paid research, but LS9 would spend up to 15 minutes answering an uncharged query. LS4 highlighted the important point that local and remote users, and their needs, are not always mutually exclusive (7.3). What is clear is that local studies seem to be 'up for the challenge' of providing an enthusiastic and worthwhile service to family historians, and despite fears (Billeter 2001, Webster 2005 and others) that practitioners may be unprepared, there did not seem to be any feeling of hesitation in assisting in any way possible (LS2).

With such great diversity of service names, structures and operations, how has that affected the "identity" of local studies for practitioners? LS4 admitted that "local studies as concept is not so prominent". LS3 emphasised this issue, noting "it is sometimes not obvious to non-specialist staff how local studies fits into the national and regional agendas". It is difficult, if not impossible, to pin down specific roles for local studies, given the number of different functions and responsibilities local studies can connect with, including lifelong learning, lending, reference, community information, and both formal and informal education. LS7 emphasised that "local studies can deliver on all sort of local and national agendas". Does this wide applicability cause the downfall of local studies' in terms of identity? As LS1 described, "local studies has a bit of an identity problem" within their larger departments, LAs, and with some members of the public. To combat space restrictions, their collection was moved to a less accessible location, and local use collapsed. Materials were split, with some moved into the centrally-located record office, however "whilst helpful to most of the users, it has meant that most people now overlook the rest of the collection completely and those books in the record office have taken on the identity of the record office collections rather than the local studies collection". LS10 similarly described "Local studies now has an established identity after a period of lost profile" whilst merged with reference.

Joint services were considered both positive and negative, depending on the area in question and its political situation. LS13 felt local studies' identity and management approach had been "swallowed" within a combined service, and although they felt things had since moved forward, "there is reluctance to change with certain staff members". LS8 felt "our loyalties are split in a way, between libraries and heritage". LS1 felt that combining some parts of the local studies collection with the record office had led to a reduced service to users, with the

specialist staff member split between sites. Usage had also "dropped sharply, despite being on a main bus route and having free parking". It is certainly regrettable when combined services lead to reduced usage or service, but this was the exception rather than the rule. LS3 noted a positive experience, where all relevant staff, "specialist" resources and indices are gathered together in one location. LS5, noting that most London boroughs combined "local history and archives services...within the library service", felt that, although different outlooks within one service was "not always ideal", local history did successfully maintain its own identity and status. Similarly LS9 felt local studies maintained its identity particularly in resource acquisition and "specialist library cataloguing and knowledge". Other practitioners felt their services were well recognised within their libraries and LAs. LS6 maintained "a separate content management system used to maintain its [separate] online catalogue". LS7's service appeared to have strong advocates amongst authority senior management, who were "very sympathetic to the objectives of the service and aware of its importance to the community", which can be extremely beneficial for both service survival (in some cases) and pushing objectives forward (7.8).

In terms of measures to enhance identity, LS10 commented that "maintaining a dedicated post of local studies librarian" would strengthen the identity of local studies. LS7, highlighting a trend for losing specialist qualified local studies professional staff, warned that the "huge potential for community engagement will be lost with it". LS10 also noted overlaps of responsibility both with neighbouring areas, and within other areas of the authority, causes a great deal of confusion amongst users. LS8 felt that branding would be beneficial, and was working toward colour-coding and strongly identifying heritage areas within all their libraries. Whether this was considered for online provision was unclear, but would certainly be a helpful strategy in drawing attention to local studies materials.

7.3   e-Local Studies

For both groups (and these are interchangeable because local people use on-line resources between visits, and remote, especially foreign, users sometimes visit) we need to provide as many physical resources as we can; as much expertise as we can muster; access to commercially produced on-line information and to make our own unique information holdings available on line.   (LS4)

Local studies practitioners saw the role of their website as more homogenised in terms of an identical role for both local and remote users, and in many cases no distinction was made

(LS1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 11). As LS4 notes above, user groups are not mutually exclusive (Reid 2003). The role of information provider was still present in some cases, but this was largely eclipsed in the majority of cases by an all-encompassing role advertising the materials and services offered (LS3, 5); "thus enabling local users to gain a better understanding of what we hold before a visit" (LS10); and "the terms on which it can be accessed", both physically, and with online access (via forms) to the paid research service (LS11). LS2 also felt that sample "electronic cop[ies] of material...gives people a flavour" of the collection before a visit. LS6 felt their website "has a stronger role to play in the study of community history as this reflects the main purpose and strength of our collections", and the web widened access to this.

LS3[196] and 7 felt digitisation should be used as a means to increase access to the collection, through "online materials they can use remotely" (LS7), such as name indexes to physical resources[197] (often produced in association with family history societies); these are highly valued by users (8.5). It should provide, if possible, further information than just guides to the collection, such as details of "the borough's history and historic buildings" (LS5). LS3 felt that "family history databases such as *Ancestry*" should also be available to users, in addition to links and guidance to other online information (LS6, 7), and research guidance for novice family historians. In terms of 'remote facilities', LS9 saw "the archives' web presence as a way of helping researchers to understand what facilities are available to them", and as planning information (also LS6). Similarly, LS10 felt websites enabled "remote users to determine if we are the right place to contact for an enquiry". Perhaps there is less of a distinction between "local" and "remote" here because it appears most practitioners concentrate less on actual information provision through their websites, excepting information about the collection and service itself.

Initially, the benchmarking exercise (3.8) aimed to establish and record a local studies home page (LSHP). This was by no means straightforward, and in some cases none could be identified. This illustrates a lack of service standardisation (although there will be necessary differences due to the individuality of each service area) and the lack of visibility of local

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[196] Should have a family history point on the Internet site and if possible provide access to a database of "surnames" and act as a signpost to family history Internet sites. (LS3)
[197] Such as marriage, baptism registers, settlement certificates, wills etc.

studies online. The URLs of LSHPs were recorded (Appendix 21)[198], and as expected were extremely variable, both in length and descriptiveness; some indicative examples are listed below. The length and complexity of these can be off-putting to users, and they are certainly not memorable (5.5). However, within a LA framework avoiding this will never be a realistic eventuality. Authority websites will almost certainly employ a database or content management systems to manage their websites; consequently the majority (if not all) pages will be dynamically generated[199]. This allows the output and/or appearance of pages to be altered, depending on user choices or specifications, to meet accessibility requirements for text-only versions (W3C 1999) or make provision for bi-lingual populations (Welsh and certain Scottish authorities). Such pages may not be stored in a hierarchical structure, although the majority (123, 64%) still appear to indicate this to the user, reflecting a multi-level structure.

> http://www.yateheritage.co.uk
> http://www.westminster.gov.uk/archives
> http://www.solihull.gov.uk/heritage/default.htm
> http://www.bexley.gov.uk/localstudies/index.html
> http://www.w-isles.gov.uk/library/locstud.htm
> http://www.clacksweb.org.uk/culture/localhistoryandlocalstudies
> http://www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure/archives/lslibrary
> http://www.kingston.gov.uk/browse/leisure/museum/local_history_and_archives.htm
> http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/learning/learn-libraries/learn-libraries-looking/learn-libraries-local-studies.htm

The remaining 69 (36%) were more reflective of dynamic origins, although some do contain hierarchical elements.

> http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/leisure/archives/3584.asp
> http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en-gb/DNAP-77LK5Y
> http://www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.menus/local_studies.htm
> http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/publicsite/kcxml/04_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y_QjzKL94039HcCSZnFO8WHOepHogtZIoSC9L31fT3yc1P1A_QLckMjyh0dFQFqSqhk/delta/base64xml/L0lDU0lKQ1RPN29na21BISEvb0VvUUFBSVFnakZJQUFRaENFSVFqR0VBLzRKRmlDbzBlaDFpY29uUVZHaGGQtc0lRIS83X01fMzdMLzM0MA!!?WCM_PORTLET=PC_7_M_37L_WCM&WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=http://apps.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/Internet/Council+services/Leisure+and+culture/History+and+heritage/Oxfordshire+Studies/

Table 7.1 summarises the relationship of LSHPs with LA home pages.

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[198] URLS were recorded from what was displayed in the address bar: other links or addresses may additionally forward there. as this would be what anyone bookmarking the page would record). On 3 occasions a URL was not displayed.

[199] Pages are not fixed, and freshly generated each time the page is accessed on the server.

Relationship	Frequency	%
Internal	184	90.6
Internal, with distinctive design/branding	3	1.5
Internal, but additional domain name	1	0.5
External	15	7.4

Table 7.1: Relationship of LSHPs to Local Authority

As can be seen, the vast majority of LSHPs reside within the parent authority website. Similarly the majority, 127 (63%), of LSHPs were located within the libraries section of the site, whilst 67 (33%) were found outside libraries. This gives an indication of the proportion of services still within library management structures. In 9 (4%) cases, this information was undetermined, because either the site structure was unclear, or an LSHP had not initially been identified.

In terms of navigation routes from the library home to the LSHP, the majority (118, 61%) could be reached in one click; 55 (28%) in 2 clicks, 19 (10%) in 3, and 2 (1%) in 4. For 74 (38%) sites, it was necessary to scroll to find at least one of the links. Table 7.2 gives some examples of navigation routes from libraries home to the LSHP (one-click routes were considered self-explanatory). As can be seen, some routes were not immediately intuitive. In some cases multiple routes were offered to the same destination (e.g. local studies OR local history OR family history).

	Example Routes
2 Clicks	Looking for a Book?; Local Studies Archives; Local Studies Library Collections; Archives and Special Collections Community Life and Leisure; Local History and Heritage Culture; Heritage Service Family Tree; Community History Information Services; Local Studies Leisure and Culture; Heritage Library & Information Service; Local History Local History & Heritage; Archives and Local History Local Information; Local Studies library Learning, Reference and Information; Local Studies Museums and Heritage; Local History Room Records and Archives; Local Studies
3 Clicks	Leisure and Culture; Archive Services; Local Studies Library Services; Local Studies; Heritage Hub Community Libraries; Central Library; Local History Leisure and Culture; Museum and Local History; Archives and Local History Service
4 Clicks	What's in Your Library; Local and Naval Studies Education and Learning; Local History; Local History Centre Home; Leisure and Culture; History and Heritage; Heritage Centre

Table 7.2: Example routes from Library Home to Local Studies Home

Incidences of four-click routes occurred primarily where the user needed to navigate to the LA homepage to escape the library structure, before subsequently navigating to local studies. Such a structure can be extremely confusing and frustrating, especially to an inexperienced user, and there is great potential to 'get lost'. This was noted in many cases during benchmarking. Especially where content was provided on several pages, the pages were not always consistently linked from a central point, or highlighted to each other. Content was often only discovered after a long trawl or hunt through the site structure.

The perceived importance of the website to a local studies service again varied widely, reflecting the differences in the depth and quality of local studies websites observed both here and by research participants (8.3). Most practitioners held their site as important, if not "crucial" (LS4). In the case of LS6, their site (hosting the local studies catalogue) was "the principal source of information about our collections for both the staff and the public". The main sense of importance was held in promotional and informational terms (LS3, 5, 6, 10): "important as a means of establishing our existence for those interested in [the area] whether for family or local history" (LS1). LS7 and LS13 saw their site as very important, although

with the proviso that much more informational development was required. Similarly LS10 also asserted the importance of their site as "a promotional/informative tool, describing our resources" but accessibility currently limited it's' usefulness.

LS2b felt their site was "adequate", showing the extent of the service and charges, but importantly didn't *"want to blow up the situation beyond what's manageable"*. Equally LS8 admitted they *"wouldn't see our website as a priority*, though I know we should make more use of it". These are sad comments (emphasis added), but equally important in many ways as, particularly in smaller services, time for maintenance can be extremely limited (7.8). LS12 indicated that their site would gain more importance, and had been awarded heritage lottery funding "to extend site and create electronic catalogue/database" (also intimating that external funding was the only way to achieve something high-quality). LS11 detailed three relevant sites (internal, external photograph-hosting, and contribution to a collaborative project) and their importance to service provision, also noting of their LSHP that "web folk here say it's one of the higher used council pages", demonstrating the *clear relevance of e-local studies* to researchers. Similarly, LS9's web-editor was struck by the "amount of interest that there has been in the index lists published there. These register in search engine queries and have driven a significant amount of traffic to the site". These two examples highlight that "there is definitely a demand for this kind of local information online" (LS9) *where it is available and made known* or *easily discoverable* through search engines.

With this perceived importance of websites for providing information and awareness about services and collections, contact details are a crucial and fundamental element of this provision (5.3.2, 8.5). Information required by users planning a visit includes finding out where to go, when they can go, and what they can expect when they get there. Figure 7.2 explores the presence of these on LSHPs.

Availability of Contact Details
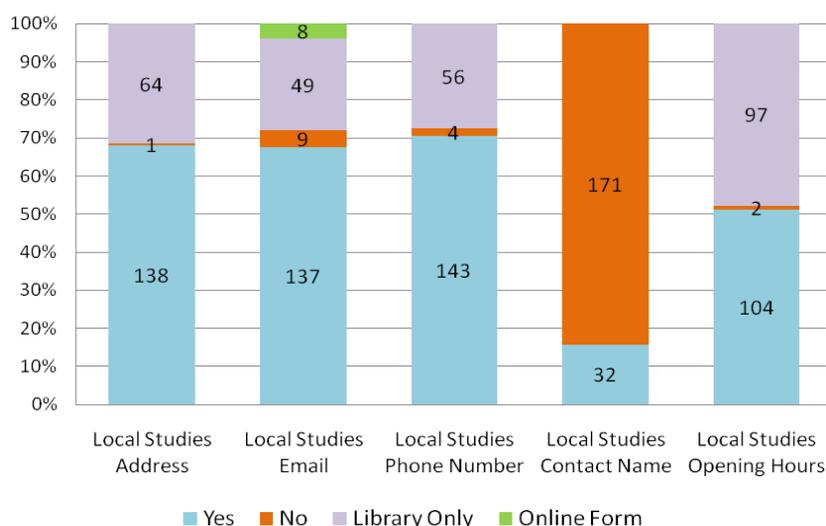
Figure 7.2: Presence of Contact Details

Although in all but a handful of cases, contact information was provided, it is preferable for local studies to host this on their own pages rather than on those of the parent library[200], as it is clearer and more convenient for the user (8.7). Locating this information was straightforward for the most part (119, 59%), moderately straightforward (34%), but challenging in 5 cases (3%). The provision and easy location of contact information should be fundamental for services. Ten (5%) LSHPs offered no attempt at collection description, an important part of the role of e-local studies. Specificity in others' descriptions varied between highly detailed (54, 27%); brief (82, 40%); and minimal (57, 28%).

Most (188, 93%) authorities provided OPACs including local studies materials. These covered: all libraries or archives (154, 76%); all libraries and heritage services (12, 6%), or were a consortium/union catalogue (22, 11%) across multiple authorities. Of those 188, 112 (60%) could isolate and search only local studies materials and/or locations. However, not all of these were directly linked from the LSHP itself to the parent library pages. The vast majority of collections do provide an enquiry email address, either the main contact address for the service, or a specific enquiry address. It is also helpful that these are specifically for Local Studies in most cases, as this should save time for both the service and the enquirer. Online forms were in use by 40 services. Figures 7.3 summarises the availability of paid research services, and the methods by which they are accessible. It is encouraging that the

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[200] Or archive/museum service.

majority of collections providing paid research services visibly specify their charges; such up-front information is valued by (potential) users (8.5).
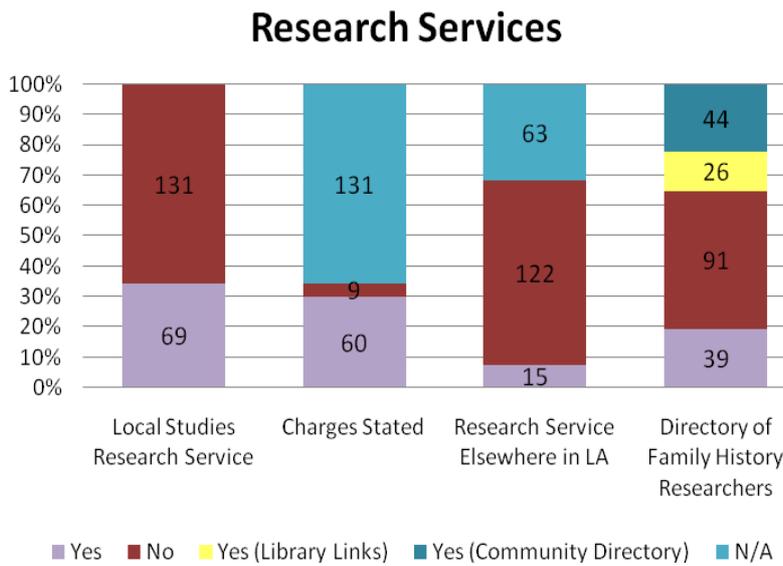
Figure 7.3: Research Services

Statements regarding other policies were not so clear; information about any photocopying/reproduction policy were observed from only 87 (43%); only 89 (44%) collections made any reference to access restrictions that may be in place regarding (particularly older and more fragile) materials. If services wish to provide enough information for visitors to make the best of any visit, this kind of information is highly valuable, if not essential, to those travelling from a distance. Figure 7.4 examines the availability of additional guidance materials, such as collection leaflets, and research instruction.
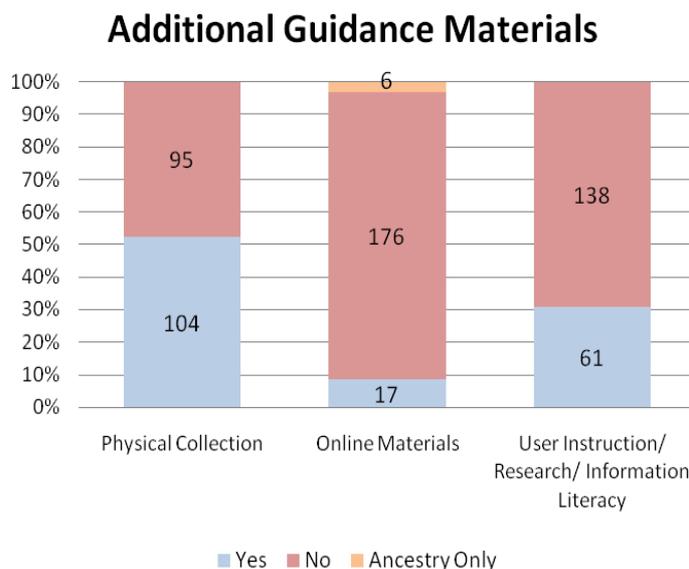
Figure 7.4: Additional Guidance Materials Provided

As can be seen, there is more provision of resource, rather than research guides. However, many services made no provision whatsoever, even for physical materials in the collection. Figures 7.5 and 7.6 show examples from Hampshire and Devon, of guides to their respective holdings of electoral registers and census returns. Hampshire's page is well balanced, with images, and additionally states items NOT held by their service, which can be a great time-saver for researchers (8.7). Devon specifically details the 1901 Census, giving referrals to additional online sources (in this case the National Archives); this kind of referral was also well regarded by users (8.5). Users can also clearly access links (left-hand side) to other areas of the local studies site, and a contact link (top-right).
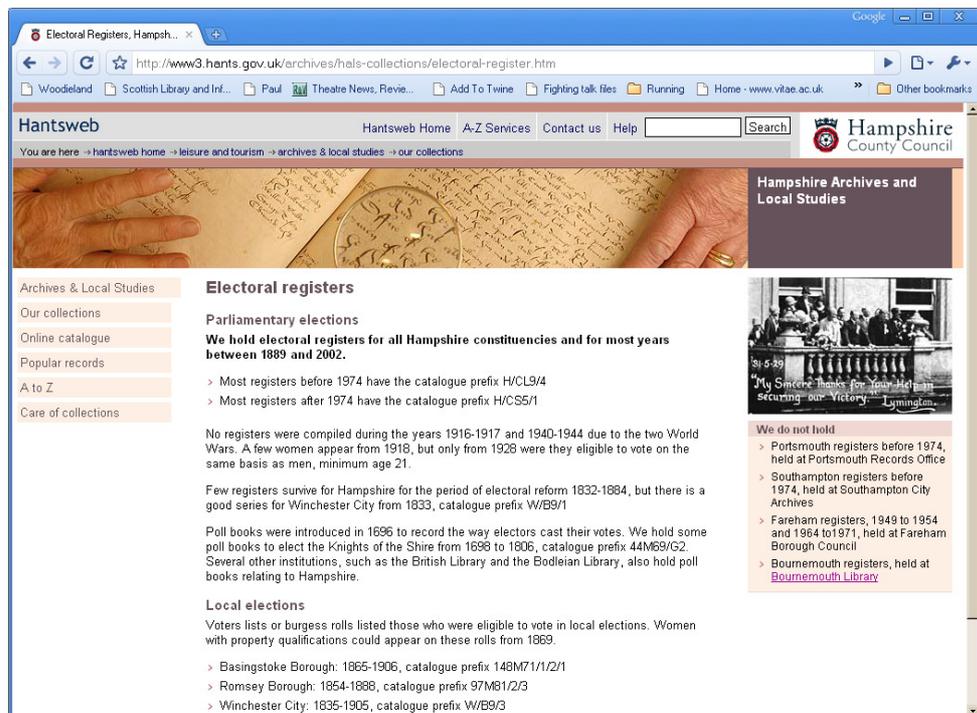
Figure 7.5: Hampshire Archives and Local Studies Collection Description of Electoral Registers[201]

[201] Hampshire County Council, 2011. *Electoral Registers. [online]* Available at: http://www3.hants.gov.uk/archives/hals-collections/electoral-register.htm [Accessed 13 September 2011]
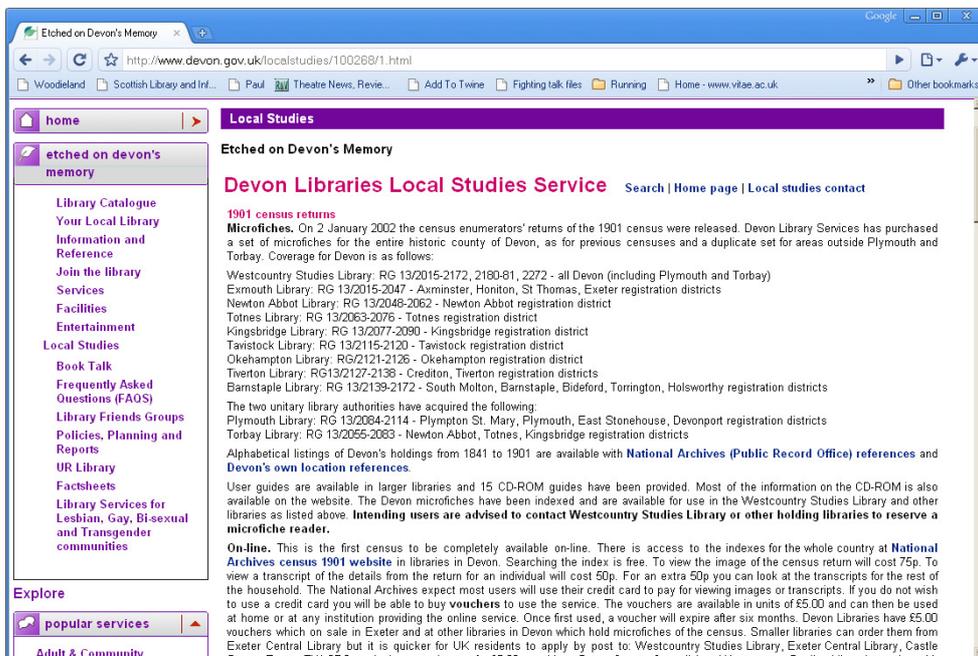
Figure 7.6: Devon Local Studies Service Guide to Using Census Returns[202]

Devon also provide an excellent service FAQ[203]. Figure 7.7 shows West Dunbartonshire's *Family History Research* guide; additional links to resource can also be seen on the left-hand side.
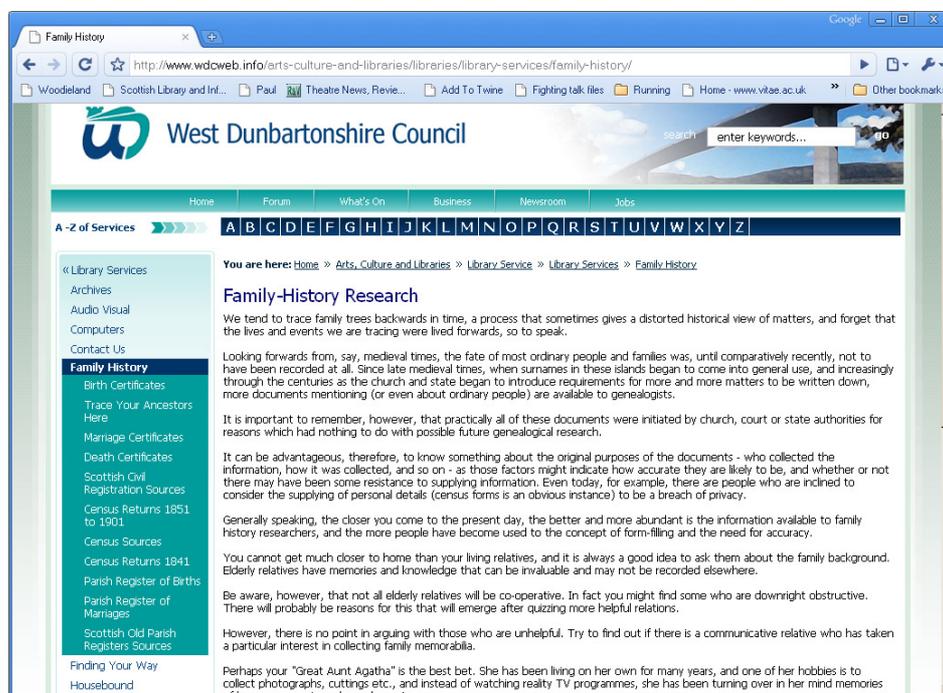
Figure 7.7: West Dunbartonshire Guide to Family History Research[204]

[202] Devon County Council, 2011b. *1901 Census Returns* [online] Available at:
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100268/1.html [Accessed on 13 September 2011]
[203] Devon County Council, 2011c. *About the local studies website* [online] Available at:
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100175/1.html [Accessed on 13 September 2011]

Surrey's History Centre also provided a range of *Historical Research Guides*[205], including Family and House History, but also for specific groups such as Romany and traveller ancestors; and resources including land tax and mental hospital records. Doncaster Council's *Family and Local History Alphabet*[206] also provides integrated guides to both their holdings and research help.

In some cases, there had been little development of sites in the previous three years (LS1, 10); LS12's LSHP had only been created the previous year. Others' changes were positive: increases in content (LS4, 5, 11), updates to resources, links, advertising of events and exhibitions, and changes to service information. LS5 had added "illustrations of book front covers" in their publication sales section; which they felt might encourage sales. LS6 and 9 had gained better control of content and content management. LS6's site was now dynamically-driven by a content management system, and had an improved search engine, meaning they could "update the online catalogue in real time and add a much larger range of content...[However] much of the content is not so visible to search engines as the old site (part of the 'deep' web)". Other changes included increased usability and migration of older electronic resources into newer formats (LS7), something all services will need to consider as formats, standards and hardware update.

What did practitioners feel was the best feature of their websites? This question revealed quite negative feelings from many respondents, so much so that two services felt that their sites did not have one (LS1,10), and that there had been little progress in the last 3 years. Echoing comments made by others above, LS4 felt their resource "only scratches the surface of what might be done", or that tight constraints greatly limited what could be achieved (LS3). Although "currently only a kernel of info[rmation]", LS12 considered their site's very existence, after a "long battle" with authority management, was a great achievement. Interlinking with other LA services (LS2, 5), the sales publications section (LS5), and ease of

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[204] West Dunbartonshire Council, 2011. *Family History Research* [online] Available at: [Accessed on 13 September 2011]
[205] Surrey County Council, 2011. [online] Available at: http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/sccwebsite/sccwspages.nsf/ LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTF/ Archives+and+history+research+guides?opendocument [Accessed on 13 September 2011]
[206] Doncaster Council, 2011. *Family & Local History Alphabet* [online] Available at: http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/Leisure_in_Doncaster/ Libraries/Archives_Local_Studies/family_local_history/Local_and_Family_History_Links.asp [Accessed on 13 September 2011]

use (LS9) were also cited. Others felt changes currently under development would become "best features", such as improvements in navigation following a service-led review (LS11), and development of online indexes (LS3). Only two services felt that content-related elements were their best feature; LS6's OPAC (mentioned above) and an "increasing number of digitised images". LS7 felt most proud of their online surname index, but also of the increased detail presented about their collections: "you can put a lot of detail on line that was too expensive to publish on paper". This gives a very negative reflection of how practitioners view their site, which is unsettling given the increasing importance of these resources.

7.4 Experiences with family historians

A significant section of the literature details a strained relationship between librarians/archivists and family historians, although this has altered in more recent times (2.5). Practitioner impressions and experience of researchers here were generally positive. "Most family historians I have met are friendly and helpful in exchanging information or helping those just starting out" (LS1). They are often persistent (6.9) "though at times they may require/demand more assistance than we can give" (LS10). LS3 "noticed two types, those only interested in names and dates, and those that are interested in a broader family history". Although LS1 felt "a few are inclined to give up when they realise it is not as easy as they thought", generally impressions were better than often portrayed in the literature.

The media constantly refer to a "family history boom" in recent times, and all practitioners were keen to acknowledge a noticeable continuing increase in interest in family history. However, local studies libraries have not necessarily experienced much of a boom in numbers; instead perhaps they have seen "demand grown steadily over 30 years" (LS4). Indeed, many years ago LS12 noticed usage figures "shot through the roof" after purchasing the GRO BMD indexes, and had observed "a very distinctive boom over the past 15 years". Likewise, LS7 were "aware of increasing interest ever since the mid 1980s". LS1 noticed an increase "but not as much as I expected"; LS2, 3, and 11 also felt that the boom reflected "the use of Internet resources and people researching their family tree at home" instead of within libraries (LS3). LS11 observed the "age profile of genealogists dropping", as reflected in the survey results (4.3), as *WDYTYA?* and other media coverage "have probably helped younger

people get motivated" (LS2b). LS8 had also observed an increase in younger researchers, although the majority "tend to be middle aged/elderly with time on their hands" (as with many of Gill (2007)'s beginner researchers). This increase in available leisure time both from retirement and from other lifestyle changes, such as living away from "immediate family" (LS3) and feeling disconnected (LS4), drives the need to reconnect with their roots and their "place in the world" (LS4).

Both broadcast and print media are frequently cited as having an important role in this boom; increasing the visibility of research and resources and encouraging a younger demographic as noted above. It is evident that *WDYTYA?* has definitely had an impact in increasing both awareness and popularity (LS4[207], 9; Simor 2006), but as reflected in the comments above, the "real" boom happened over 20 years before the programme was made. In the USA, the 1977 mini-series *Roots* is often credited (Sinko and Peters 1983; LS13) as a major catalyst, but as LS1 observes, other programmes have played their part.

> *The BBC obviously played its role in bringing family history to a much wider audience but I think that growth was well under way before that. Both BBC and Channel 4 promoted history fairly heavily during 2000 as part of the Millennium celebrations and this may have kick-started the boom. Programmes such as 'The House Detectives' can also lead into an interest in finding out about those who lived in a house previously which is an extension of family history.*

After a "tidal wave of beginners" resulting from the first series of *WDYTYA?* (LS7, 13), many practitioners noted increased family historian visits during (LS13) and after a series (LS7, 12, 13). However, LS12 noted the programme also "heighten[s] the expectations of the public" of what is available. LS13 also reflected that the "media highlights possibilities, but does it make things look to easy?" Others felt the increased availability and visibility of resources brought about by the Internet (LS4, 10), and increased simplicity of research enabled by "sites such as *Ancestry* and *Cyndislist*" (LS1), had vastly contributed to the boom. LS9 discussed the huge increase in accessibility which had come about: "more records have been indexed, digitised and made available through the Internet", which reduced the need for travel. It is most likely that the interplay between TV/media coverage (increased visibility) and the vast increase in availability and accessibility of resources (LS2a, 3, 6, 10) have brought the boom about together. Indeed, LS1 noted "Whether the growth of sites on the

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[207] "Both reflect the interest which exists and stimulates more people to try their hand" (LS4).

Internet is a cause or an effect of the family history boom I am not sure"; it is unlikely this will ever be determined for certain.

Despite increases in participation, practitioners had not observed vast changes in the expectations of family historians (LS5, 11, 13): "it's always been broad, from expecting us to do the research to accepting the need to work hard" (LS11). LS1 speculated whether changes might be gradual and less observable. "Perhaps there is a slight increase in those who do not necessarily understand that not all records have survived and that there are gaps in our information". Similarly LS10 felt that there was an increased "casual" interest in the subject, where more people may be put off by the actual work involved. They did still note that "We do still get serious researchers in using our service too", where there is less (even no) expectation in terms of the assistance which is available from local studies. Likewise LS1 noted "on the other hand there are those who are surprised at how much information there is!"; something reflected in user assessments of e-local studies (8.2, 8.5).

There is little doubt that the media, alongside increased speed brought about by the Internet, have raised expectations (LS2b, 4, 8, 11, 12, 13), particularly of researchers either beginning their research, or approaching local studies for the first time. "Answers are expected much faster. Those who are seriously involved with family history have more patience than those starting out [who] expect answers to arrive just like they appear on TV programmes! They are the minority though!" (LS2b). LS11 observed "increasing expectation[s] that material should be digitised, at least until you explain why it isn't!" Similarly LS4 found "folk are quite prepared to do the research themselves once they understand the situation". While acknowledging increased availability, LS6 and LS9 both emphasised that the survival of information and records was not uniform in all areas, and that consultation or original records was still required[208]. On a more positive note, LS3 observed "the ease of finding material on the Internet is also encouraging some people to look at more specialist material such as educational records, militia lists, taxation etc." LS9 similarly noted "family historians have become more demanding with the questions they ask and for the materials they want

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[208] "There is a higher expectation for original material and indexes to be available on the Internet or in a computerised database. Some people find it frustrating if they are unable to find information quickly and are less willing to look through original resources to discover the information they need. There is also the tendency to feel that if you can't find the information online it does not exist, people do not expect the index to be wrong and forget that the name may be transcribed wrongly or not indexed at all" (LS9).

to look at", showing recognition of researchers' increasing sophistication. LS12 had seen changes in a different manner, in that researchers were "realising limitations of the Internet" and were increasingly looking to local studies for guidance to "understand what they are looking at". LS7 similarly encountered patrons who often needed assistance interpreting "a muddle of stuff off the Internet". LS11[209] always ensured that responses to queries included search strategies for users, and LS9 aimed to raise awareness of research skills through a number of user education initiatives[210].

The biggest change in terms of local and remote use of local studies was the increase in email enquiries (LS1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13), which are easier to instigate and send than perhaps letters were in the past. "E-mail is a wonderfully quick method of communicating and it is so much easier to maintain a dialogue when there are questions to be asked and answered on both sides" (LS1). This view is largely representative of all responding practitioners: "it is much easier to send off an e-mail" (LS9), although "not always [easy] to answer" (LS5). LS12 felt that "generally enquirers do not give enough information in their emails", something that could be addressed using an online form (see above). E-mail has also allowed enquiries to come from further afield in the country and indeed worldwide[211] (LS2, 4, 5, 13). LS2 found that their enquiries, where previously 70% were from the local area, were now "probably nearer 55%". LS7 commented "there is no doubt use has decreased since the days when we were the only library [in the region] with the GRO indexes on microfilm/fiche and our readers were booked up 3 weeks in advance. However remote users have replaced the bums on seats and our user figures are still respectable". Although remote use had increased, not all services found local usage has consequently decreased. LS9 saw their "overall total number of visitors has risen...items produced by staff have gone up so has self service film and fiche usage". LS8 observed "a noticeable increase in [computer] usage" since their subscription to *Ancestry Library*. In addition to *WDYTYA?*-related increases in activity, busy periods were reported in "autumn and spring" (LS13), or from January to March (LS8).

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[209] "We are the whole picture!" (LS11).
[210] "We hope that by currently running family history workshops in partnership with the local family history society, researchers will learn the research skills needed to carry out their own research" (LS9).
[211] LS2 notes in particular Sweden, France, and Commonwealth Countries; LS4 "Demand from relatives in Australia, USA, Canada, New Zealand".

Overwhelmingly, statistics for family history enquiries were not isolated (LS1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13). LS1 no longer differentiated statistics relating to family history as boundaries became "increasingly blurred". LS10, reviewing their performance indicators, noted they in future would "most likely maintain separate figures for family history enquiries based on resources used". LS7 did not distinguish between enquiries, but reported that their "last big customer survey...put our split as around 75% FH"; likewise LS12 reflected that family history accounted "for over 50% of enquiries". LS2 recorded the location and method of enquirers, and of paid searches. LS9 collected a great variety[212] of data which can "back up our requests for resources and can give evidence about how we need to improve practice and/or services, [and] help influence future plans. They can also be used to measure success and marketing strategies for monitoring and for planning". Statistics, and increasingly online statistics, will become more and more important to justify services when libraries are fighting for survival in some cases.

7.5   e-Local Studies Online Content

Benchmarking examined e-local studies content in 3 areas: internally hosted (within the LA website), an external site (under authority control), and contributions to an independent or collaborative site. e-Content was defined as the presence of digital material irrespective of format (i.e. text, images, sound or other), even of a sample nature. Electronic indexes to digital or non-digital material were also included. Some content was presented in 156 (77%) of LSHPs; 47 (23%) offered none (or showed no indication of its existence). Figure 7.8 gives an indication of the distribution of different areas of content (listed in Appendix 22).

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[212] Examples given include: Stock productions and enquiry statistics; Percentage of new users; Visitors book figures; Surveys; CIPFA; Hub statistics etc. fed via the museum to the NW hub; The PSQG Survey of Visitors to British Archives; Statistics of the popular archives; Evaluation statistics of events and workshops; Comments book, Complaints etc.; Informal conversations with our users; Address analysis. (LS9)

e-Local Studies Content
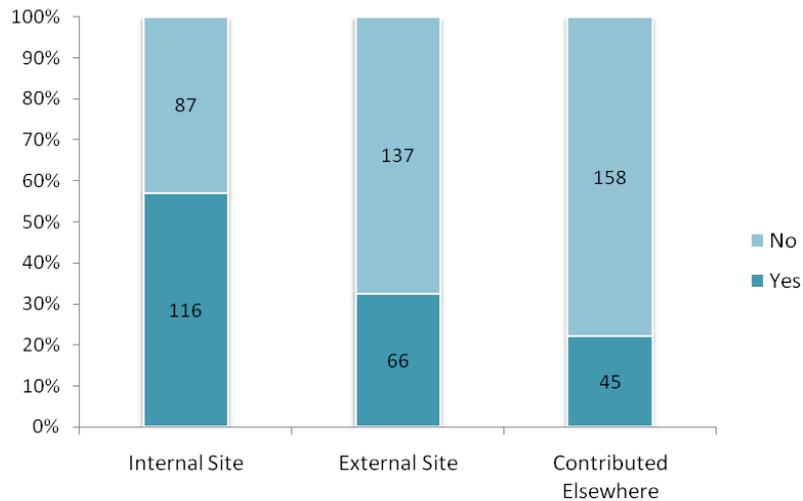
Figure 7.8: e-Local Studies Content

Although internally-hosted content was most common, often this was not to the same depth of that seen externally. Figure 7.9 illustrates *Cheshire Tithe Maps Online*[213], which provides information regarding Victorian land ownership and occupancy.
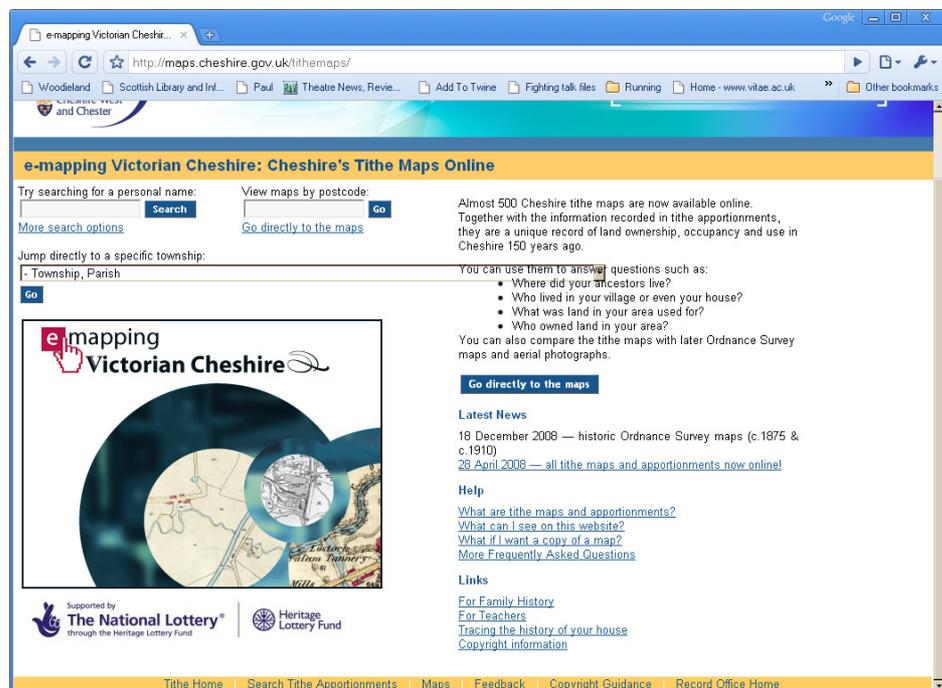
Figure 7.9: Cheshire's Tithe Maps Online[214]

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[213] At the time of Benchmarking, this content was provided by Cheshire County Council, which ceased to exist on April 1st 2009.
[214] Cheshire Archives and Local Studies, 2011. *Cheshire's Tithe Maps Online* [online] Available at:
http://maps.cheshire.gov.uk/tithemaps/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

As can been seen in the top-left corner, users can browse users can browse a specific area, or search maps by name or postcode. The help section explains the sort of research questions the maps can answer. *NOAH (Norfolk Online Access to Heritage)*[215] is a combined search tool for cultural services, providing federated search access to the library catalogue, catalogues from many local museums and castles, the local newspapers index; the *Picture Norfolk* digital image archive and other historical maps and information. Some examples of externally hosted content are shown in Figures 7.10 and 7.11; *Peakland Heritage* (Derbyshire) and *The Glasgow Story* (Glasgow City). *Peakland Heritage* features the character of Middleton Mole as a guide to the site, appealing to children whilst not excluding more serious researchers. The site describes and illustrates many aspect of the area's history, linking to resources, repositories and catalogues where appropriate. *The Glasgow Story*, created in partnership with Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities with lottery funding, presents the history of the city though words, images, and various e-resources such as valuation rolls, ward maps and biographies. Free registration allows users to bookmark images for future visits.
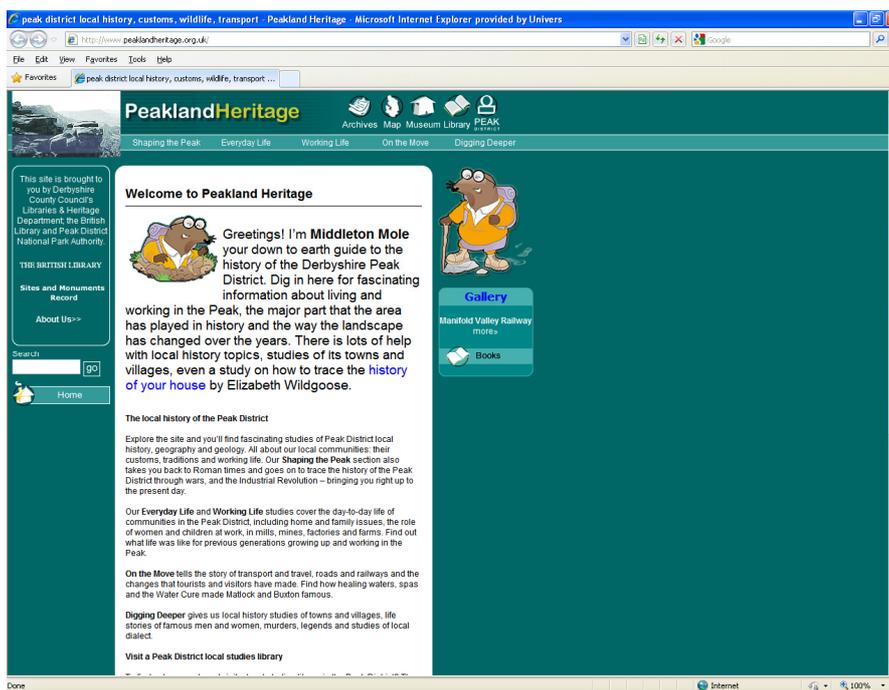
Figure 7.10: Peakland Heritage[216]

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[215] Norfolk County Council, 2011. *Norfolk Online Access to Heritage* [online] Available at: http://www.noah.norfolk.gov.uk/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[216] Derbyshire County Council, 2011. *Peakland Heritage* [online] Available at: http://www.peaklandheritage.org.uk [Accessed 13 May 2011]

Figure 7.11: The Glasgow Story[217]

Similarly, *Slough History Online*[218] presents various themes from the local history in text and images, with searchable digitised newspapers. Initially created with lottery funding, continues to grow with a great deal of help from volunteer indexers (Pilmer 2007). Figure 7.12 shows *Routes to Your Roots* (Rhondda Cynon Taff). This site was considered outstanding, featuring many digital images and providing clear and attractive research guidance for family, house and community history research in the area, integrating all the authority heritage services.

[217] TheGlasgowStory, 2011. *The Glasgow Story* [online] Available at: http://www.theglasgowstory.com [Accessed 13 May 2011]
[218] Slough Borough Council, 2011. *Slough History Online* [online] Available at: http://www.sloughhistoryonline.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

Figure 7.12: Routes to Your Roots[219]

What was surprising was that neither local studies nor the library service linked or promoted *Routes to Your Routes*; this excellent resource was discovered via a press release. Other excellent sites discovered that were not linked from local studies were *Spinning the Web*[220] and the *North East Folklore Archive*[221], both well hidden on their respective LA sites.

Again a wide range of sites was evident in cases where e-local studies content has been contributed externally. Content has been most prominently contributed to: *Historical Directories* (11); *Newsplan*[222] (6); *BBC WW2 People's War*[223] (5); *Picture the Past*[224] (4); *Thames Pilot*[225] (4); and *Tomorrow's History*[226] (4). Figures 7.13 and 7.14 illustrate the *BBC WW2 People's War* project and *PORTCITIES Liverpool*. *BBC WW2 People's War* has collected images and

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[219] Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council, 2011. *Route to Your Roots.* [online] Available at: http://www.routetoyourroots.co.uk/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[220] Manchester City Council, 2011a. *Spinning the Web.* [online] Available at: http://www.spinningtheweb.org.uk [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[221] Aberdeenshire Council, 2011. *North East Folklore Archive* [online] Available at: http://www.nefa.net/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[222] British Library, 2011b. *Newsplan* [online] Available at: http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/bldept/news/newsplan/newsplan.html [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[223] BBC, 2011d. *WW2 People's War* [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[224] North East Midland Photographic Record, 2011. *Picture the Past* [online] Available at: http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[225] ThamesPilot, 2011. *ThamesPilot* [online] Available at: http://www.thamespilot.org.uk [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[226] Newcastle City Council, 2011. *Tomorrow's History* [online] Available at: http://www.tomorrows-history.com/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

stories in a huge community archive. *PORTCITIES* is one of a number of collaborative sites through the UK celebrating the shipping industry.
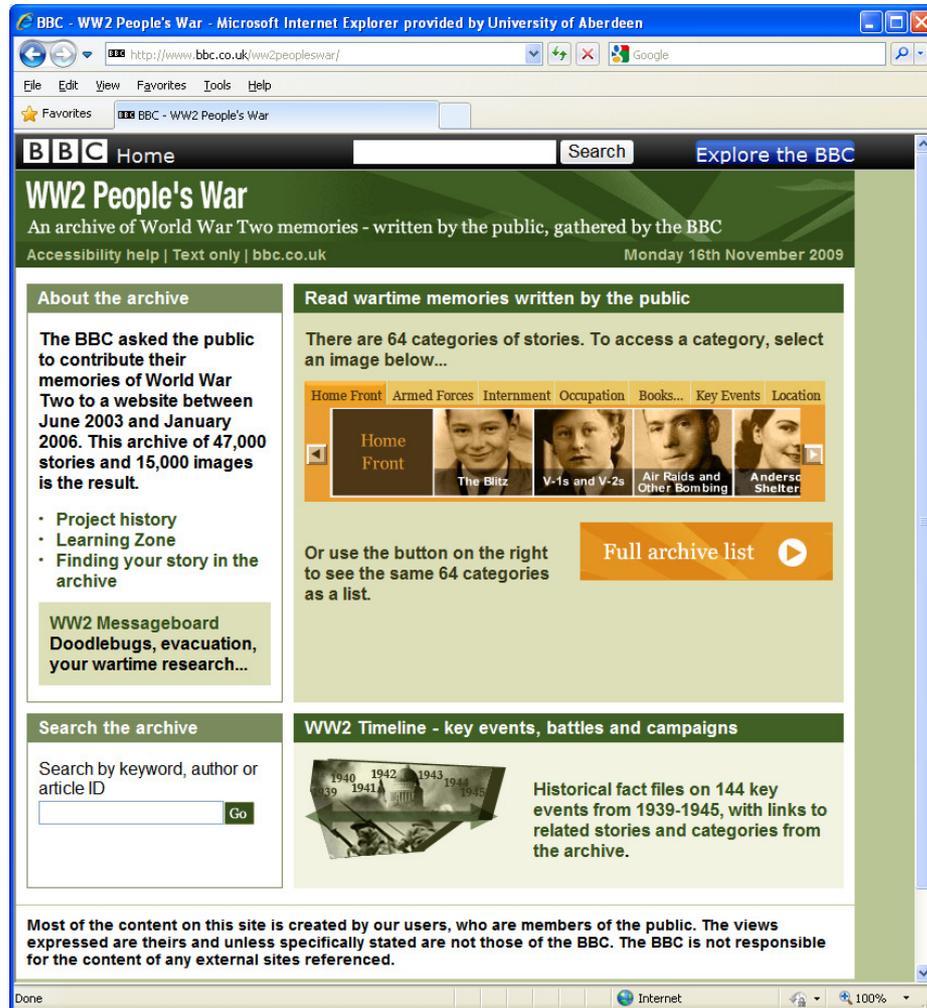
Figure 7.13: BBC WW2 People's War[227]

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[227] BBC, 2011d. *WW2 People's War* [online] Available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar [Accessed 13 May 2011]
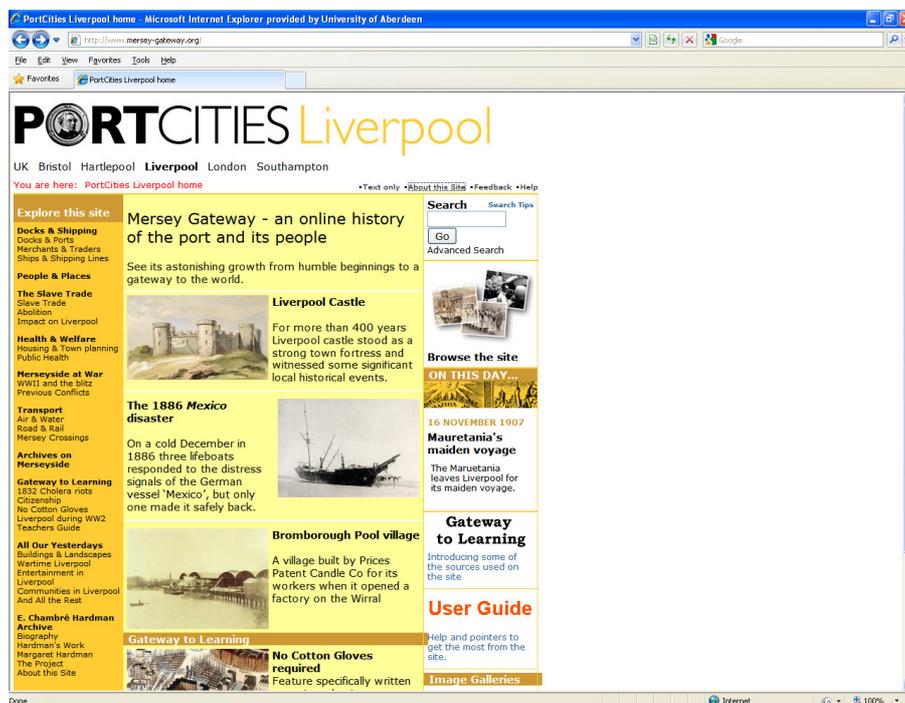
Figure 7.14: PORTCITIES Liverpool[228]

Photo websites were extremely prevalent in this section (e.g. *Photo London; Images of England; Pictures in Print* (Durham University)[229]); *SCAN* and *SCRAN* were prominent within Scottish LAs. Much collaboration was evident across London boroughs, projects such *Untold London*[230], and *Moving Here*[231], which explored various topics of immigrants to London. *Ayrshire Working Lives*[232] is a collection of images from the area's agricultural and industrial history, gathered from many relevant local heritage organisations. Benchmarking also sought evidence of service collaborations with relevant external agencies (e.g. Friends organisations, local and family history societies). These were not overly prominent on LSHPs, but there is an awareness of the practice throughout the literature (Litzer 1997; Allery 2000 and others). Indexes of newspapers, wills and other resources held by services can be constructed by volunteers and Friends groups, for example the outputs of Friends of the Archives of Dumfries and Galloway indexing projects are displayed on the local studies/archives website, including census returns, Kirk sessions and shipping registers[233]. Similarly, in collaboration with local family history societies in 2004, Liverpool Local Studies

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[228] PortCities, 2011b. *PortCities Liverpool* [online] Available at: http://www.mersey-gateway.org [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[229] Durham University, 2011. *Pictures in Print* [online] Available at: http://www.dur.ac.uk/picturesinprint/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[230] Untold London, 2011. *Untold London* [online] Available at: http://www.untoldlondon.org.uk [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[231] National Archives, 2011e. *Moving Here* [online] Available at: http://www.movinghere.org.uk [13 May 2011]

[232] Ayrshire Libraries Forum, 2009. *Ayrshire Working Lives* [online] Available at: http://www.workinglives.org.uk [Accessed 16 November 2009]

[233] Dumfries and Galloway Council, 2009. *Researching Local History* [online] Available at: http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=7259 [Accessed 16 November 2009]

facilitated the submission of Liverpool Marriage Indexes to *Lancashire BMD*. Services can also host the libraries of local groups' materials, such Ambleside Oral History Group's Library of Recordings in Cumbria[234], and the *Cornish Audio Visual Archive*[235] in Cornwall.

Links have been frequently cited as a vital part of e-local studies provision (Reid 2003), helping bridge the gap between local and national resources, and are highly valued by users (8.5). The wide variety of links encountered were categorised as follows for benchmarking purposes:

- National Libraries/Archives/Repositories;
- National Genealogy/Family History sites;
- Local Libraries/Archives/Repositories;
- Local Genealogy/Family History/Local History sites;
- International Sites; and
- Other relevant LA areas (within their own LA).

As previously discussed, categorisation of e-resources can be problematic (3.6, 5.2) as categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive (e.g. *Ancestry* could be considered national and international). Figure 7.15 illustrates categories of link commonly encountered.

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[234] Cumbria County Council, 2010. *Local Studies Resources* [online] Available at:
http://www.clic.cumbria.gov.uk/rooms/portal/page/10048_Local_Studies_Resources [Accessed 14 January 2010.]
[235] University of Exeter, 2011. *The Cornish Audio Visual Archive* [online] Available at: http://www.cava-studies.org/index.html
[Accessed 13 May 2011]

Categories of Links Supplied
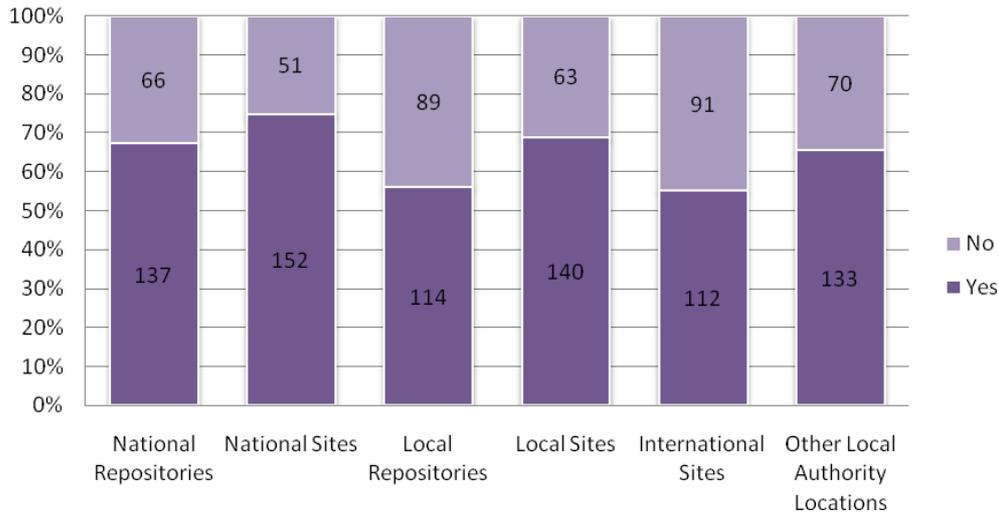
Figure 7.15: Categories of Family History Links Provided

All but 21 of LA sites offered at least some links. One problem with provision of links is the need to ensure their continuing currency (8.5)[236]. Listing of outdated links was most noticeable with large, well-publicised resources such as the former *1837Online*, a link to which was found on 4 occasions, despite the name having changed to *FindMyPast* around 18 months prior to data collection. Similarly, 2 Scottish LSHPs listed *Scots Origins* as "the official government source of genealogical data for Scotland", instead of *ScotlandsPeople*. Areas of the LA website offering family history links were also varied, as illustrated in Figure 7.16.
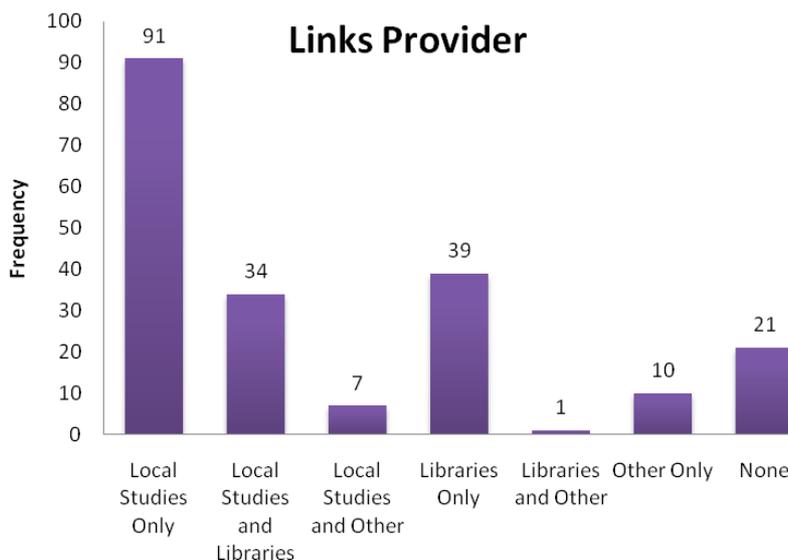
Figure 7.16: Area of LA Website Providing Local Studies/Family History Links

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[236] Link-checking software is available to validate the currency of weblinks; see Laux, M., 2003. *Keeping Those Links Up-to-Date* [online] Available at: http://java.sun.com/developer/technicalArticles/Programming/linkupdate/ [Accessed 20 August 2011]

Practitioners reported that access to online subscription databases was largely offered through libraries and not specifically by the local studies service; and it was not clear how many offered remote access to these. LS10 only mentioned database subscriptions "specifically [relevant] for local studies", so this listing (Table 7.3) may not reflect their entire database provision.

Database	*Subscribers*
Ancestry (Library Edition)	LS3,5,6,8,10,12,13
Times Digital Archive	LS5,6,7
ODNB/Oxford Online	LS1,6,10
NewsUK	LS1,10
Encyclopaedia Britannica	LS1
SCRAN	LS10

Table 7.3: Database Subscribers

Ancestry (Library Edition) was by far the most-frequently cited (although this may have been seen by respondents as the most relevant to the present research) and there seemed to be a high user enthusiasm for this (8.5). LS8 described a "noticeable increase in usage" since taking out the subscription, and LS1 was keen to add *Ancestry* to their service as soon as possible. LS6 felt they provided "an excellent range of content which we could never have contemplated on microfilm or microfiche", although navigation and searching could be improved. LS7 didn't "particularly like it and our user guide is all about warnings of atrocious transcriptions etc but it has transformed what we can do for our users. Like any other tool it has its weaknesses but it has kicked us forward into a new type of demand...***It is changing our role but not, I think, seriously threatening it***" (emphasis added). LS8 considered that unfriendly printing may put off first-time users. LS10 also drew attention to the upcoming *ScotlandsPeople* voucher access scheme through Scottish libraries (Miller 2007); this and *Ancestry* access particularly illustrates the changing role for local studies in helping interpret online information and resources. Other databases highlighted here were a Chesterfield Surname Index, and those available on *Peakland Heritage* (LS7).

Benchmarking also discovered that databases were largely provided through libraries, primarily in-house (not remotely). Of LAs, 111 (55%) offered users access to *Ancestry* Library Edition; others did not, or did not visibly publicise the availability. Other relevant databases were offered by 197 services (Figure 7.17), but in some cases the information could not be ascertained without library membership (to log into the catalogue).

Number of Database Subscribers
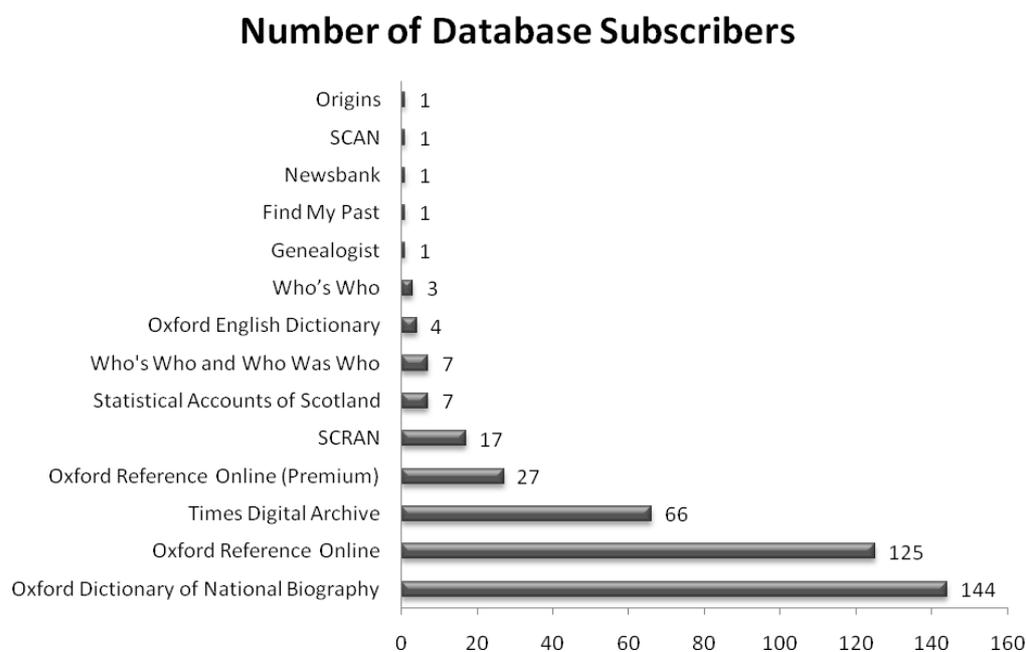
Figure 7.17: Number of LA Subscribers to Various Databases

7.6   Collection and Service Promotion

Most services asserted that their websites were important promotional tools (7.3), able to feature news (LS9), "What's On" and events calendars (LS9, 13), and the library catalogue (LS6), often overlooked as a promotional tool. Few other electronic means were mentioned; LS6 relied on links from other websites and being "picked-up" by search engines. LS9 noted encouragingly that their site was "optimised to achieve the best possible visibility on search engines (Search Engine Optimisation, SEO)". Resources were also highlighted in general library e-newsletters (LS3). In addition to their websites, a wide range of traditional promotional tools were utilised by practitioners, such as; leaflets and posters (LS1, 4, 6, 10, 11); encouraging word of mouth (LS2, 6) with "high level customer care" (LS11), contributions to local newspapers and magazines (LS3, 13), and local studies publications (LS11). Events included taster sessions and courses in family history, Internet, and other aspects of research (LS3, 4, 10); advice sessions (LS13); and running both internal and

external training courses (LS1, 11). Tours (LS3,13) exhibitions (LS10), and community talks and lectures (LS3, 4, 10, 13) also took place, as well as involvement with local and national events such as National Museums Month, Heritage Open Days, (LS1, 3, 11) Scottish Local History week (LS10); and local history book fairs (LS13). LS7 utilised "Anything I can access[237]", whilst noting that "It can be difficult to get publicity that promotes what we are and do if it doesn't obviously serve to glorify "The Council". Figure 7.18 shows promotional activity encountered during benchmarking.

Use of Promotional Tools
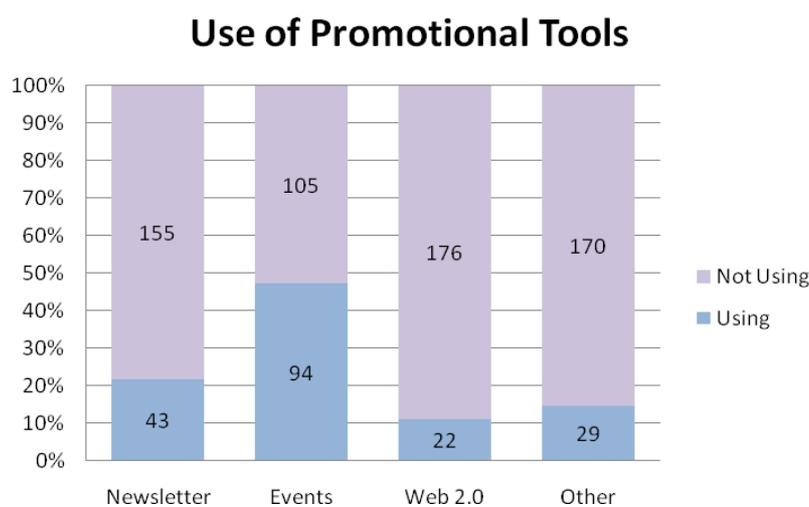
Figure 7.18: Local Studies Use of Various Promotional Tools

Events (or What's On) sections were most frequently encountered: many wide-ranging events were detailed on sites. Courses (15) were popular, as were family history clinics/advice sessions (9), covering a wide range of subjects[238] and experience levels. These could also be led by family history societies or volunteers. Family/local history groups/clubs (7) were both run by and met in the library/local studies. Talks (15) and exhibitions (7) took place both online and at the library/within the community. Other events included family history fairs (4), family history day/open days (3) and local history walks. Services publishing a newsletter used a mixture of hard-copy and electronic versions. Essex libraries

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[237] Examples cited: [Council] Public Relations: our press office does press releases but they promote the council, not individual departments. Personal contacts with the media; leaflets, displayed in all service points, and outside organisations e.g. tourist information centres and museums. Presence at library events e.g. readers day, literature festival, older people's days, family learning week. Talks to outside organisations (publicised by having an entry in two library-produced lists of speakers.) Going to non library public events e.g. agricultural shows, Christmas markets. A publications programme bringing new books out a couple of times a year. Stand alone websites for photos and popular history. Links from some well used family/local history web sites e.g. *Familia* and Ann Andrews' Matlock Bath pages.

[238] e.g. Family and local history; various record types (both on and offline); Ancestry; Digital Ancestors.

offered email subscription[239] to their newsletter, and Tower Hamlets offered a PDF *Local History and Archives News*, available both on the website and by email subscription (Fig. 7.19).

Figure 7.19: Tower Hamlets Local History and Archives e-Newsletter[240]

Web 2.0 and Library 2.0, once dismissed as buzzwords, can be very effective promotional tools. Only one service (LS9) reported having any such tools[241] in use; others did not (LS2, 10, 11), or not at that present time (LS1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13). LS1 could not "see the need for an RSS feed at this stage as new information is not added often enough", which does imply an openness to future use. LS9 noted that news, "what's on" and searches had an RSS feed; meaning users can be automatically notified of new items "via their feed reader". Four services offered blogs, 3 of which have since disappeared or been discontinued. Hartlepool libraries offered podcasts from certain events; although these were not immediately related to local studies, the experience may benefit local studies at a future date. Figure 7.20 shows *Salford City Council's Discussion Forum* (including family history section).

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[239] Essex County Council Libraries, 2011. *Essex Libraries News* [online] Available at: http://www.free-library-news.net [Accessed 11 May 2011]

[240] Tower Hamlets Council, 2012. *Local History Library and Archive Newsletter* [online] Available at: http://www.ideastore.co.uk/en/articles/information_local_studies_archives_local_studies_library_and_archive_newsletter [Accessed 20 April 2012]

[241] Examples given were social networks, RSS feeds, and blogs.
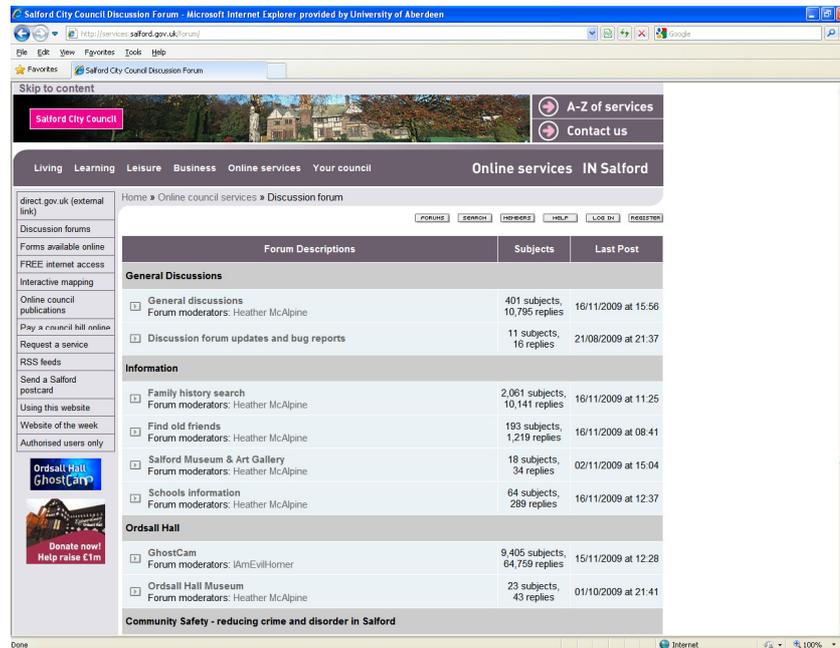
Figure 7.20: Salford Discussion Forum[242]

This, and the similar *Newham Local History Bulletin Board*[243], allows users to have real participation and interaction with services. Figure 7.21 shows a Plymouth Local Studies entry on photo-sharing website *Flickr[244]*.
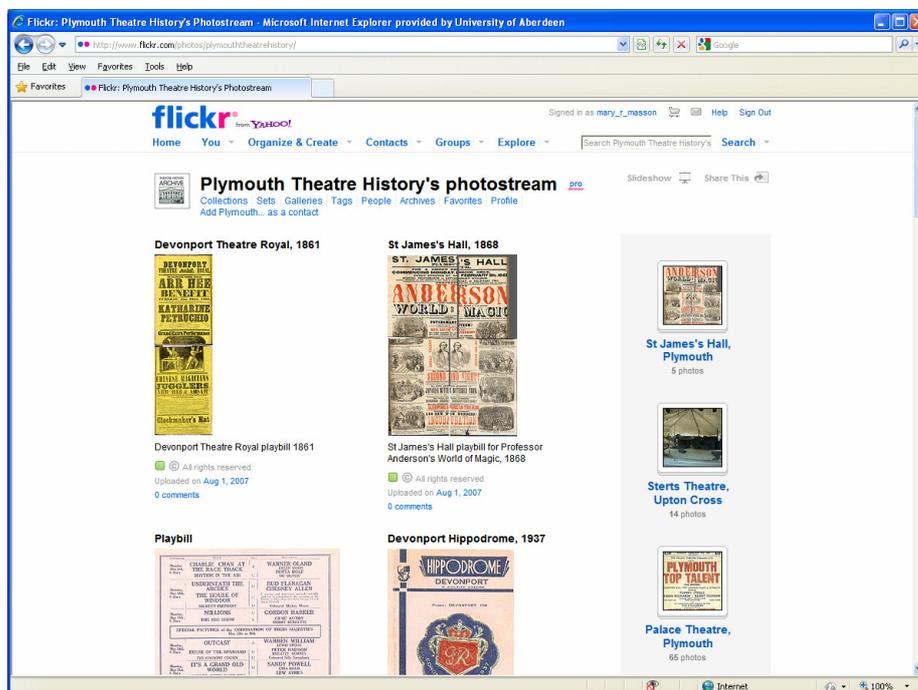
Figure 7.21: Flickr (Plymouth Theatre History's Photostream)[245]

[242] Salford City Council, 2011. *Discussion Forum* [online] Available at: http://services.salford.gov.uk/forum/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[243] Newham Council, 2011. *The Newham Story Forums* [online] Available at: http://newhamstory.com/forums/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[244] Flickr, 2011a. *Flickr.com* [online] Available at: http://www.flickr.com [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[245] Flickr, 2011b *Plymouth Theatre History's photostream.* [online] Available at:
http://www.flickr.com/photos/plymouththeatrehistory/

Solihull Heritage and Local Studies are now using *Flickr*[246], *MySpace*[247] and *YouTube*[248] to promote materials and engage users (Gill and Williams 2010). East Lothian Libraries used a *Pageflakes*[249] "start page" to collate much useful links and information, including Local Studies and Family History resources, although this has since moved to a new provider[250]. Links to virtual reference services were noted, as were the provision of RSS feeds for either certain pages or new search results, as noted by LS9 above.

Indication of possible future use from interviewees was mixed. A number saw no use for social technologies in their service (LS2, 10); "even if we had time to use these" (LS5). Others were more open to the technologies. Both LS3 and LS4 expressed their interest, but were restricted in their use by LA policies. LS11 was also open to the technologies in principle, "but don't understand their potential". LS1 was keen to establish an online events calendar, and employ social networks to ease communication with their local history forum. LS6 wanted to harness "user generated content...particularly capturing memories and recollections for the study of community history". LS7, inspired by Grimsby Library's page on *MySpace*[251], felt "this will become increasingly important and we should be there", and was keen to investigate possibilities.

Other promotional activities involving photographs encouraged interactivity and user involvement with collections. Asking for help in identifying "mystery pictures" was popular, harnessing the local knowledge of the community. An example from *Devon Local Studie*s is shown in Figure 7.23.

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[246] Flickr , 2011c. *Solihull Heritage & Local Studies Service's photostream* [online] Available at:
http://www.flickr.com/people/solihull_heritage/ [Accessed 7 August 2011]
[247] MySpace, 2011a. *Solihull Council Heritage & Local Studies Service* [online] Available at: http://www.myspace.com/mysolihull [Accessed 7 August 2011]
[248] YouTube, 2011. *Solihull Heritage & Local Studies Service* [online] Available at: http://www.youtube.com/user/SolihullHLS [Accessed 7 August 2011]
[249] Pageflakes, 2011. *Pageflakes* [online] Available at: http://www.pageflakes.com [Accessed 7 August 2011]
[250] Netvibes, 2011. *East Lothian Libraries* [online] Available at: http://www.netvibes.com/east-lothian-libraries#Library_Page [Accessed 7 August 2011]
[251] MySpace, 2011b. *Grimsby Library* [online] Available at: http://www.myspace.com/grimsbylibrary [Accessed 29 June 2011]
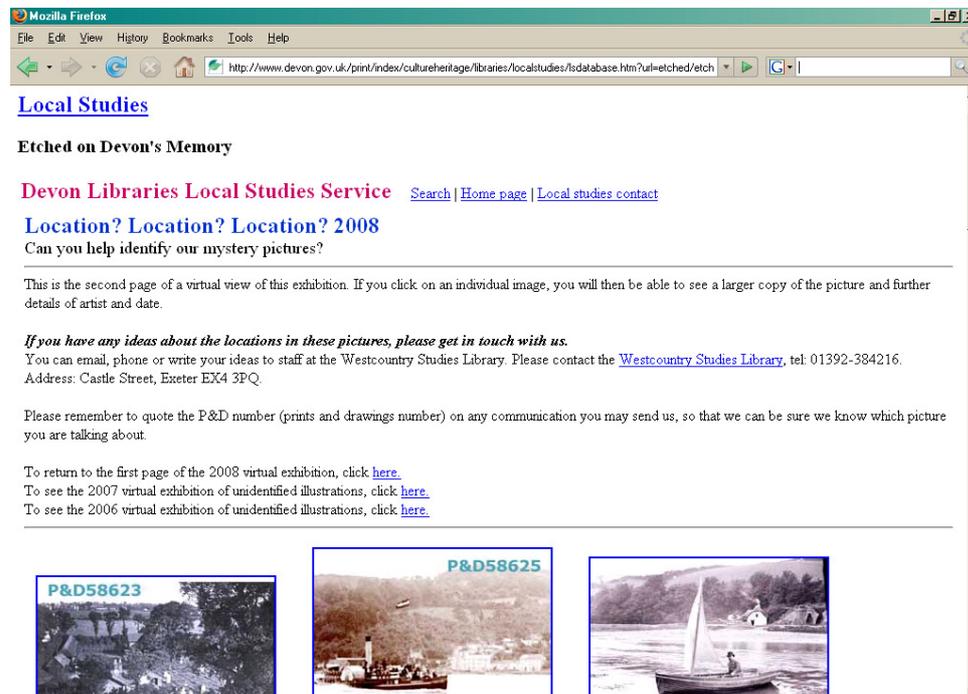
Figure 7.22: Devon Local Studies "Mystery Photographs"[252]

As with Plymouth's use of *Flickr* (Figure 7.21, users are encouraged to submit any information on the photographs, or their own recollections. Similarly Argyll and Bute provided downloadable 'memory sheets' for users to submit memories of the area. Camden actively encouraged users to "Contribute your image to the Local Studies and Archives Centre"[253], whilst Richmond's local studies collection features a "Community Archive"[254], showing user-contributed images from the borough from different time periods. Both Hull[255] and Dundee offered options to send e-cards with historic images from the collections, effective advertising in itself as well as fun. MLA North East had established an online heritage shop[256] for their area, combining the online shops for items from libraries, museums and other related organisations across their region (n-e-life.com n.d.). City of Westminster Archives have featured an Archives Advent Calendar each December; other mini-exhibitions were widely observed, highlighting a particular document, theme, or archive of the month. Other services produced various local history publications (Martin 1985; Duckett 1997).

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[252] Devon County Council, 2010. *Location? Location? Location?* [online] Available at:
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/139491/1.html [Accessed 9 June 2010]
[253] Camden Council, 2011. *Contribute your image to the Local Studies and Archives Centre* [online] Available at:
http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/leisure/local-history/contribute-your-image-to-the-local-studies-and-archives-centre.en;jsessionid=29E5B02BE48BF6E18BCBF6290F810C58 [Accessed 11 May 2011]
[254] London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, 2011. *Community Archive* [online] Available at:
http://www2.richmond.gov.uk/communityarchive [Accessed 11 May 2011]
[255] Hull County Council, 2010. *Postcards* [online] Available at: http://prismdata.hullcc.gov.uk/gallery2/v/Postcards [Accessed 9 June 2010]
[256] Not active at 10 May 2011.

Search engine visibility is an important factor in promotion of Local Studies services. To test e-local studies visibility, four searches were performed with the *Google* search engine[257] for each LA using the following search terms: *X Local Studies*, *X Local History*, *X Family History*, and *X Genealogy*, where *X* represents the name of the LA[258]. The presences in the *Google* results are summarised in Figure 7.24.
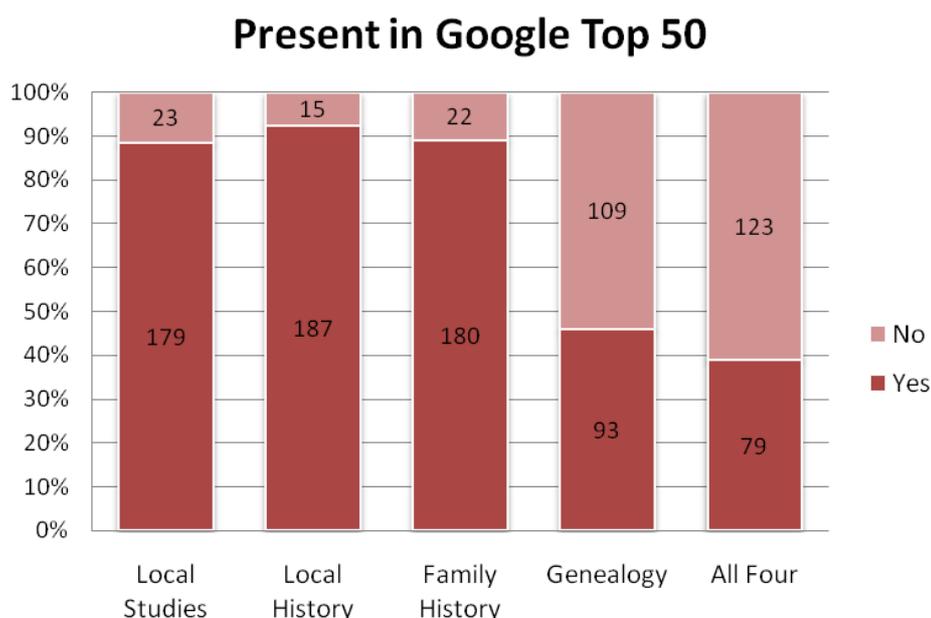
Figure 7.23: LA Local Studies Sites which appear in Top 50 Results of Google Searches

Literature (Jansen *et al.* 1998 amongst others) indicates that searchers examine and investigate relatively few search results, often not venturing past the first page of results (8.4); in light of this, Figure 7.26 shows the results of identical searches, but for sites featuring in the Top 10 (1st page) of *Google* results. As can be seen, family history and in particular genealogy have both dropped off quite significantly.

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[257] Searches performed on www.google.co.uk, between 13/11/2007 and 26/11/2007.

[258] The number listed relates to Local Studies' (or near alternative council page) position, within the first 50 results (X for no appearance in the top 50: 5 results pages). If Local Studies itself (or libraries) is not being brought up, other sites, talking about the service/giving contact details show/link to more often than not.

Present in Google Top 10
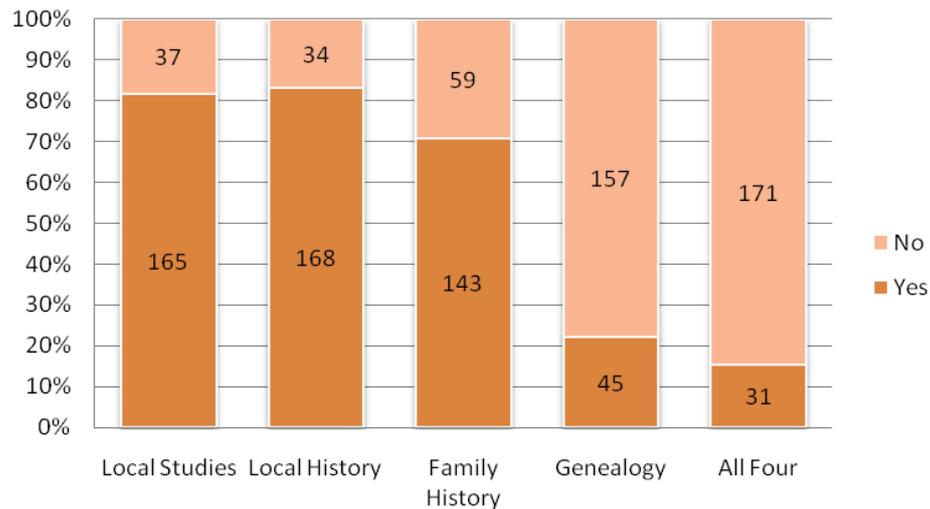
Figure 7.24: LA Local Studies which appear in Top 10 Results of Google Searches

In the various reorganisations of Local Government over the years (1.3), many names of counties, regions and administrative areas have changed (or changed back) since the mid-1970s, and those researching at a distance may not be aware of this. The four searches above were repeated with the 92 pre-1974 historical counties[259]. Again family history and, in particular, genealogy produced fewest results, with only 36 in the top 50. Excepting those whose names directly featured within search terms, authorities with local studies featuring within the top 10 for the relevant areas were: Luton, Reading, Slough, Milton Keynes, Cumbria, Sutherland, Redcar and Cleveland, Havering, Southend-on-Sea, Bromley, Medway, Oldham, Hillingdon, Stoke-on-Trent, Sutton, Coventry, Swindon, Kirklees, Angus, Moray, East Lothian, Dumfries and Galloway, Powys, Ceredigion, Bridgend, and Swansea.

7.7 Council Web Elements

In terms of their service input into LSHPs, the majority (LS1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13) of practitioners had no influence or control over the design and structure of "their" web pages, because the whole LA site is standardised. They do however largely author and supply the content for the pages. All LS10's staff members contributed materials; however "the corporate style has to be adhered to and it proves extremely limiting on what we can do". LS3 found "use of images is restricted. Hyperlinks can only be added as signposts in the top

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[259] As found in: Association of British Counties, 2008. *The Gazetteer of British Place Names* [online] Available at: http://www.gazetteer.co.uk [Accessed 4 May 2011]

right of a page and only with the permission of the IT department". Although it resided on a separate server, LS6 noted "strong pressure to maintain a standard 'look and feel'" to their website. Restrictions on the placement of links are particularly unhelpful, as this prevents linking between departments. Although relationships with IT departments and LA policies could be strained, LS7 noted a positive working relationship, "providing what you want is within the system". They did however note the rigidity of that system, and that it was difficult to achieve things in as timely a manner as would be preferred. LS9 noted that although their service was "council-run, it is in the fortunate position of maintaining its own web site... [and] complete control (within the technical constraints) over what is added and how it is displayed".

Four collections (LS1, 2, 11, 12) were not aware that their LA collected website statistics for their service pages; others recorded page hits (LS5, 6, 10), but were unaware of further details. LS8 was slight bemused at the lack of availability even of page-hit statistics: "IT tell me that the Council don't have software in place to do this at present. Must say, that rather surprised me"; considering how well-established and widespread that technology is. LS3 could access figures of "the number of users, and length of time spent and which pages they visited". LS9 (having more direct control) could "filter web stats results and monitor the number of visitors, page views for any given section or page". Further data provided by LS7 (Appendix 23) from August 2006 indicated that their LSHP, with 3743 views, was the most popular page in their libraries section (after the home page with 8469 views); more visits than their OPAC received. It was also interesting to note that libraries and local Studies had a 9.1% share of unique visitors, and 2.5% of page views of the entire council site. This again shows the popularity of such material with the public when it is *made available and made known*.

In terms of structural navigation elements, all sites featured a Home link (to either the LA or library/archive home); an A-Z Index (179, 88%) or site map (126, 62%) were also widely popular. Breadcrumb trails, showing the user's position in the website structure, featured fully on 147 (72%) sites; also observed were partial trails (5, 3%) or trails contained within the site's main navigation (13, 6%). The majority (195, 96%) featured a site-wide search facility, the provider of which was predominately hidden, although Google was identified in 40

(20%) sites. Table 7.4 rates common elements concerning usability and appearance of LSHPs. Although rating introduces an element of subjectivity into the assessment, this could not really be avoided, and was minimised with all ratings carried out by the same researcher. The elements concerned are those over which many practitioners will have no control.

Element	*Good*	*Acceptable*	*Needs Improvement*
Ease of navigation	93	96	14
Loading speed	169	32	1
Appropriate use of language/length of text	174	28	1
Content presented in logical fashion	159	39	5
Scrolling	105	81	17
Appropriate font/colour	162	40	1
Appropriate use of images	125	77	1
Appropriate use of white space	110	90	2

Table 7.4: Ratings of Usability and Appearance Elements

Navigation was the most variable element here; but also one of the most important for users (8.4). It may also be most subjective from user to user. In most other elements, very few were not either good or acceptable, with only one or two cases falling into the bottom category. Accessibility of the LA sites was examined by their visible compliance with the WCAG Accessibility Guidelines (W3C 1999), of which there are 3 levels of compliance: Level A (priority 1 elements only); AA (priority 1 and 2 elements); and AAA (priority 1, 2 and 3)[260]. All local and national government sites are strongly recommended to achieve at least Level A, if not AA (Cabinet Office 2003). Sometimes evidence of compliance level is prominently displayed (as with Western Isles Council[261]); others were assessed by examining the source HTML code of the website. Figure 7.26 shows the ratings observed.

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[260] These have since been superseded by WCAG 2.0. (W3C 2008)
[261] Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, 2011. *Comhairle nan Eilean Siar* [online] Available at: http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/ [Accessed 27 June 2010]

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
Accessibility Level

13; 7%

59; 29%

6; 3%

37; 18%

88; 43%

- AAA
- AA
- A
- Tagged (Not Stated)
- No Indication
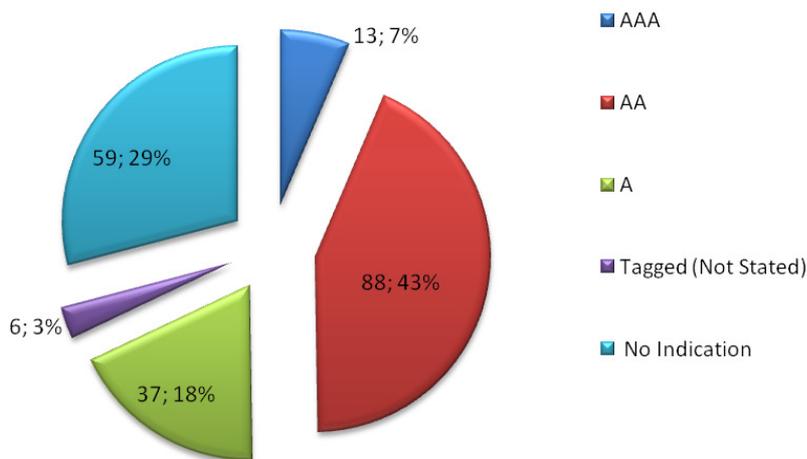
Figure 7.25: Accessibility rating according to WCAG 1.0 Guidelines

The presence of text-only versions of websites for accessibility purposes was also examined, for external sites only (government websites should provide these as a WCAG priority 1 requirement). These were visibly available in 3 of the 6 external LSHPs at the time of examination.

Currency is an important issue within websites (5.3.6); although it was difficult to gauge the update frequency as the majority of LSHPs (134, 66%) did not indicate when they were last updated or reviewed. Of the others, 46 (23%) gave a date within the previous 3 months, 12 (6%) between 3 months and 1 year, and 11 (5%) over 1 year ago. Practitioners noted that sites were updated on request (LS1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 11); although LS1 indicated that this was not always as timely as desired. LS5 actioned updates "whenever new products are being sold or whenever significant acquisitions are made", and LS7 "regularly reviewed" pages if changes were not otherwise made. The time taken for updates to be actioned by IT departments ranged from 24 hours (LS7) to 2 weeks (LS10), the upper end of which must be extremely frustrating. Both LS9 and 12 noted that finding staff time to actually write new or updated content was extremely difficult. Another issue with site currency is checking for broken links (7.5, 8.5). No broken links were encountered on 139 (68%) sites; one or two on 57 (28%); and multiple problems were displayed on 7 (4%). There are problems associated with link maintenance, as have been noted above (7.5).

7.8   *Moving Forward*

What do practitioners hope will be the future of their online services? Content and description-based goals dominated here, far more than in earlier discussions. LS3 and LS7 both aimed for increased digital content like a database of digitised materials, and name indexes to as much local studies material as possible, both online and physical. LS7 was particularly keen to be able to search and access local newspapers in a similar manner to the *Times Digital Archive*. Online ordering and payment facilities were also desirable (although it was not clear whether these would be local or remote). LS3 was also keen to develop an "online community archive" and interactive forum. LS1 wished to integrate the websites services which had recently been combined into a joint heritage service, which would still maintain individual web presences. They also wished to expand smaller stand-alone co-operative education projects already undertaken, to make resources more widely available (and of interest to all researchers), along with an event calendar. Similarly LS10 wished to create a local portal "utilising the collections of all relevant [heritage] organisations. Besides being informative on the range of resources held, we would aim to develop the [local history] to be used as an interactive educational tool"[262]. LS9 aimed for "more online documents and images", also noting the addition of both a "site-wide image search" and a major new online archive in the coming year (2009).

There was also desire to add more depth to collection descriptions and online guidance materials, featuring specific collections or particular research resources. LS10 planned to add a "knowledge base" on various subjects (including family history); and LS4 a "dedicated family history zone". LS11 aimed to increase "collection metadata, esp[ecially] archive holding descriptions", and better structure their catalogues. Both they and LS13 intended to sustain their current digital content, and add (in particular) to their digital image collections. LS6 wished to increase the effectiveness of retrieval by continued retrospective cataloguing and addition of digitised images to the main catalogue. LS8 desired clearer wording and more promotion on their site, noting "libraries are notorious for bad self-promotion at times". LS7 aimed to "make the pages sharper and snappier", and along with LS13 enhance accessibility and provide additional service information.

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[262] This has subsequently launched in 2011, welcome news that e-Local Studies is pushing forward in troubled economic times.

Practitioners realised that they would require outside help to achieve many of the aforementioned plans. "Realistic[ally], without external funding, wider co-operation with partners and a change in policy in managing heritage provision...it is unlikely we would achieve the above in the short term" (LS10). LS1 felt that developments "should be sustainable in terms of the staff time necessary to keep sites fresh and up-to-date"; whilst this is conservative, it is also very realistic. LS4 and LS5 felt that digitising a "portion" of their images was achievable, "while realising that to include all the images would not be feasible at present" (LS5). Improved levels of (searchable) collection description were also considered as a more realistic development for websites (LS9, 11); a branded 'zone' with materials/links/tutorials (similar to LS8's "heritage zone"), or improved design (LS11). LS1 had mixed feelings regarding resource digitisations, torn between increasing worldwide access and possibly reducing the need for physical visitors to their collections. "A change in the way we are measured will be necessary in the future if we are to survive in a cost-conscious environment".

As alluded to by LS10, barriers to future development of sites are primarily staff time (LS1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10) and a lack of resources/money (LS1, 3, 9, 10). These issues are highly interlinked, as LS1 illustrates. "Staff time to add new material and to keep the site up-to-date. A lack of money for digitisation projects linked to a lack of staff time to chase any available grants". With the majority of funding for this sort of project often allocated to funding members of staff or buying out their time, the issues are almost inseparable. A lack of technical expertise was also a hindrance (LS5, 6), both in terms of technical infrastructure, content development, and the technical aspects of mounting, hosting, and maintaining of websites. "Partly this is lack of IT support to develop things and, at least as important, lack of my time to review and drive it forward" (LS7). Council policies and styles have proved significant obstacles, with sites required to adhere to corporate design and content guidelines (LS3, 7, 10, 13). LS3 found that the development of a local studies database took over 2 years "working with the council's IT department. This is despite...having the indexes available and having a clear idea of how we want the indexes to work. Our website development is very much constrained by the [LA] IT department and regulations". LS11 also noted that working with several partners, even within a single authority, can add additional time to projects; much time is lost passing work between local studies (both initiation and content creation), and a web

development team. The corporate priorities of authorities can also impact on website development (LS4), and practitioners sometimes need to fight to convince management that their service is worthwhile. LS12 felt there could often be issues with certain personalities within the LA, and engaged in a "long battle to get permission to create the site" at all.

In defining examples of excellence in e-local studies, LS9 noted that the features should be the same as "any quality site...easy to use, accessible and have good quality content that is relevant to the user". These features were quite comprehensively endorsed with a need for "clarity" (LS2a) and "clear presentation of information" (LS6, 7). LS1 further developed this theme: "a good site should be easy to navigate with an uncluttered home page although some, such as *Familia*[263], take the uncluttered look to extremes. Information should be clearly presented". They should be "user friendly" and written in "everyday language" (LS13); have access to advice and services, information, holdings (LS4) and online content (LS7), and lots of links to further information. LS6 also noted the need for an "effective search engine, supported by comprehensive metadata to enable refined searches". Examples cited as particularly commendable were *Collage*[264] (City of London Libraries, Archives and Guildhall Art Gallery) (LS3); *Peakland Heritage*[265] and *Picture the Past*[266] (LS7); and *East Renfrewshire*[267]; *Manchester Local Studies and Archives*[268]; the *NLS*[269]; and *Gateshead Local Studies*[270] (LS10).

Most practitioners were keen to highlight both the positive and negatives aspects of e-family history sites and Internet information, again emphasising their role in interpreting this information for researchers; "e-family history has its role and can make resources available to those who would not necessarily be able to travel to the local office. It is beneficial when sites offer digitized images which enable people to view the original source" (LS3). LS1 notes

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[263] No longer available.

[264] City of London, 2011. *COLLAGE* [online] Available at: http://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/collage/app [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[265] Derbyshire County Council, 2011. *Peakland Heritage* [online] Available at: http://www.peaklandheritage.org.uk [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[266] North East Midland Photographic Record, 2011. *Picture the Past* [online] Available at: http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/ [Accessed 13 September 2011]

[267] East Renfrewshire Council, 2011. *Portal to the Past: East Renfrewshire's Heritage Collection* [online] Available at: http://www.portaltothepast.co.uk/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[268] Manchester City Council, 2011b. *Archives and Local Studies* [online] Available at: http://www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries/arls/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[269] NLS, 2011. *National Library of Scotland* [online] Available at: http://www.nls.uk/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

[270] Gateshead Council, 2011. *ASAP Live – Local History* [online] Available at: http://www.localhistorygateshead.com/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

that sites should be used with caution depending on their source, and not in isolation, as "ultimately one can only get so far online and older records are still largely unavailable electronically". LS10 felt too many hopes were often pinned on the Internet. "I think too many people think the Internet is the answer to everything and that you can do all your family history via the Internet...Advice from local studies librarians and others is needed to assist users to distinguish between official, authoritative sites and others, which may not be so reliable but still have their merits and uses". Similarly LS12 highlighted the need for users to be aware of the range of online sites available, noting all the "different sources that people could use, but they primarily go to well publicised ones". They also emphasised the need for staff to be aware of the sources in order to help.

Information quality is an issue widely flagged in the literature (Casteleyn 2002a, 2002b and others), and LS1 felt that "the Internet is uncontrollable so there is little that can be done about quality standards of information". LS3 stressed the need for awareness of errors in indexing, further suggesting "the public need to be educated in some way to understand that even if they do not find the material on the Internet that does not necessarily mean it doesn't exist. Items may have been transcribed incorrectly, not indexed or not be available online". Many free sites, including *FreeBMD, Genuki, FamilySearch,* were praised (LS1, 6), although LS1 was also wary of incompleteness, the "scary enthusiasm" of the LDS Church, and the sheer size of *Cyndi's List*. However, LS10 notes that "free sites will not give you access to records themselves, only information about the records and where they are held". Similarly, LS6 highlighted sites "such as [the] *BBC, National Archives*" provide excellent "how to" information about research technique; an important aspect. LS1 also distinguishes between sites providing information (e.g. the *1901 Census*) and "those that tell you where information can be found" (e.g. *A2A* and *Familia*), stressing the importance of both kinds and the fact that much "legwork can be done before a visit" to a repository.

LS8 found *Ancestry* and certain other sites to be "very user-unfriendly". In particular, printing difficulties may put off first-time users, and information was not always presented in "a well thought out manner". This is a pertinent point that e-local studies would do well consider itself, given the difficultly many users had finding information there (8.4). However, this is not all under its own control. LS1 thought the *1901 Census* "set the

benchmark for all the other similar sites". Commercialism was not a common concern, but then again perhaps libraries and local studies are more experienced with commercial information providers. LS7 was unimpressed by the "cut-throat commercialism" of vouchers for certain pay sites sold with expiry dates[271]. LS2a felt that local studies operated "on a different spectrum from the commercial world" which was "more keen on innovation". Perhaps the issues are best summed up by LS1. "On balance, I think that the Internet is a benefit to family and local history researchers as it simplifies some of the more laborious tasks e.g. scanning local census films and makes information more readily available, especially for those who cannot travel easily".

7.9   *Summary*

Examination of e-Local Studies provision throws up a number of complex issues. Services are observed to operate with a range of names and differing authority management structures. This can cause problems to users, who do not expect these differences in terminology (8.4), nor high levels of inconsistency of content. A priority for improvement is a need to improve linking from libraries and also from the authority home page to local studies pages. Practitioners did reflect that e-local studies was in its "infancy" (LS10), and "only scratches the surface of what might be done" (LS4). The main reasons for this seemed consistent across the board: lack of staff time and resources; and inflexibility of LA technical and political constraints. These barriers are likely only to increase in continued periods of budget cuts, where library branches are struggling even to remain open. Closures are threatened throughout the UK (Anstice 2011), some examples being the widely publicised Brent (Flood 2011), and Croydon, where the local studies service itself is seriously threatened (Whalley 2010). New developments in e-local studies may seem foolish when services are stretched, but arguably they may be vital to ensure the survival of services by demonstrating their relevance to today's users. The impression given by a website is incredibly important as it reflects and influences what users will get out of the service (LS12; Tucker 2004).

In Chapter 8, user interactions with e-local studies will be considered.

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[271] Voucher access is available to certain pay-per-view sites; vouchers are often sold through libraries; similar to ScotlandsPeople Library scheme (reference). It is believed that 1901 Census vouchers are no longer sold in this way (Genes Reunited Ltd., 2011x. *Help Centre* [online] Available at: http://www.1901censusonline.com/help.asp?wci=faqs&fk=63 [Accessed 3 June 2011]).

I didn't know that most of the stuff existed...I'd never tried the Local Studies section of the library. I didn't realise, especially the stuff they've got online, I didn't know it was there. (FC3)

8.1   Introduction

Although also highlighting the numerous issues involved with e-local studies, the previous chapter illustrates the fact that there is e-local studies content 'out there' and available; albeit at various levels and in many forms, excellent, adequate and everywhere in between. The question is, are most family history researchers aware of the existence of (e-)local studies content in the first place? From Chapters 5 and 6, and initial discussions in 7, we have seen e-local studies have a small (but nevertheless existent!) presence in the minds of researchers; however, it was thought of as a source on very few occasions. The impression given by certain players in the local studies professional community is that even if they are aware, the public are not that keen on engaging online with local studies materials (LS2a/b). LS8 commented that "very few customers mentioned that they've looked at" their website when making contact with the service. Wait (1987) reported on a "failed experiment" by Hackney Archives and Local Studies of putting information online. Although this content was considered "ahead of its time", this was a very early case, when access to both computers and the Internet was extremely limited, nowhere near its current penetration. On the other hand, Moray's *Libindx* (1.4, 5.4, 8.2) has been a resounding success. Following the exploration of local studies' online presence from investigator and practitioner perspectives, this final chapter of results and analysis presents family history researcher assessments and views on their experience with local studies websites. The majority of these interactions were researcher-instigated, and are largely recounted from the focus group sessions (F), where more focused and direct data on particular research questions was gathered. Reports from further spontaneous (diaries; D) and researcher-prompted (shadowing; S) local studies encounters are also included. As in the previous chapters, specific sites have been anonymised except where examples of excellence and good practice are highlighted.

8.2   Users Relationships with Local Studies

What is the status of library or local studies websites in the public consciousness? Do they
enter the thoughts of the family historian? Focus group members were directly asked about
their awareness of both the physical collections and websites *prior* to any contact with the
research. Inevitably the act of research itself and exposure of e-local studies websites to the
participants will impact on this level of awareness; therefore this cannot be considered
scientifically reliable, but does give an indication. Responses showed a varied awareness of
the local studies consciousness. All but three of the focus group participants had at least
some level of awareness of physical local studies collections. Where discussed, the source of
awareness included: employment in a public library (FA5), family history societies (FB1),
long term use (FC1, FF), and direction from *Family and Local History Handbook*[272] (FE1). S11, a
frequent local studies user, noted that she used *Familia* (7.8), primarily to gather information
about physical holdings, but observed that the site was "not always up to date".

Terminology awareness has a significant role to play here. Even though there is an apparent
high level of awareness of the available materials, many participants were not familiar with
"local studies" as a term and what this covers. For example, FB1 was highly aware and had
used her local (and other Scottish) library, and Moray's *Libindx*. But yet she wouldn't have
indentified these with the term 'local studies'. "I wouldn't have thought of looking it up
under or calling it local studies; that doesn't mean anything to me" (FB1). Confusion was by
no means unusual, and in general participants were not aware of the differences in names,
structures and organisations of council departments, and where local studies could be
attached; "I think in my case...local studies is attached to the local museum, and I just
assumed, obviously incorrectly, that was the case everywhere" (FC3). They saw this as an
irritant, and a barrier to information access.

> *That is a bit of a bugbear…its information, isn't it? And whether it's libraries or museums, or*
> *whether it's the 2 combined, they should actually be together on this, and say "people are going to*
> *be interested in what we've got. It doesn't matter whether it's a museum, a centre, a library: just*
> *say what we've got!"* (FC2)

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[272] Blatchford, R. and E., Various Dates. *The Family and Local History Handbook*. York: Blatchford. Largely a directory publication,
revised each year.

Overseas, particularly in North America, the name 'local studies' was not really known (FD2, FE1), described as "generally a UK term" (FE1). They identified that there were equivalent collections, but under different terminology. Those responding from Australasia were more familiar, as the term is used there, but were likewise confused by the remits of related agencies. FG1 noted there seemed to be "an overlap of aims and resources...I have great difficulty in knowing what 'local studies' is supposed to embrace in comparison to archives held by county archives/record offices", and was confused as to the responsibilities for holding "holding photographs, lithographs, company records, newspapers" and similar materials.

Participants were much less familiar with the concept of local studies and library websites.

> *I don't think I've ever looked at library websites.* (S4)
>
> *I have to say, it's not something I would have thought to look at, the council websites, for family history information. I had no idea that any would have links to parish registers and that kind of thing...* (FA1)

There was a definite hesitancy in acknowledgement; for example FF1 was "aware, but not hugely aware". All but one (FE1) was not very experienced in using them; indeed, where they had been used or considered as an information source, this was very occasional (FD2; FF3), or not a priority for research at that time (FG1). There was also an impression that public library websites were "focused more to lending library catalogues" (FG1). FF1 felt they were "a means to an end to get background information", and was more likely to seek out specific records, rather than a speculative investigation in a local studies collection; "it's not at my forefront straight away". FF group members, where participants' ancestors had stayed predominantly in the local area, were in agreement that having easier physical access reduced the need for their remote use; FF3 "tended not to use the websites to any great extent because of my main areas of interest being immediately accessible to me", and used the collections personally.

FE2 had used e-local studies "to some extent and with some success", but noted "as you must navigate through all the other stuff first", they were harder to use than other sites. There were participants who used websites quite frequently for both home and remote local studies collections, where "you can look at the website to see if it's worth going, to see what

they've got" (FC2). FF2 began using Sunderland's site after a research visit there, where usage subsequently developed into "others in areas where the family's been". Similarly, FF3 makes a "beeline" to other local studies collections, "even if I was on holiday", which website use has facilitated. Evidently there is some level of penetration into the public consciousness, but not at a very high level. What was clear from the discussion was that despite any reservations about the sites, all participants appeared to value local studies, which held "a wealth of information" (FF3), and were "a much under-used resource" (FE2). "Here as elsewhere, after the initial burst of energy in tracing ones ancestors thru BMDs PRs, censuses, etc there comes a time when one wishes to 'Put flesh on the Bones' and write up a family history. It is at this point that local studies collections become more important...I always stress the need for fellow genealogists to seek out the local studies repository relevant to their area of interest" (FG1). There also appeared to be a high level of trust and respect in local studies materials and staff. One group member thought herself *more* likely to use a library research service, because it was so trustworthy (FA1). The participants also clearly found that e-local studies' offerings were relevant.

That's quite good with all the photographs - you know, it seemed a bit more in-depth and interesting… (S9)

And that thing about newspapers I think is quite important, because you do come across ancestors who died in mining accidents and things, where you either know there was an inquest, or you think there was, and if they can tell you what papers they've got and what the dates are, that's really useful I think. (FA1)

They've got some online databases, going back to one of the reasons I use the Internet, I do want to be able to search actual records. (FF1)

Much to FF4's "amazement and delight" he discovered a letter from an ancestor in the catalogue of one of the sites he was assessing, where he had "never thought of looking in!" These successful interactions again highlight the relevance of e-local studies to family historians. Participants could detect, and valued, perceived practitioner enthusiasm; they appreciated that local studies "must have interested staff" to create a good site and a good collection, and this enthusiasm is much appreciated where present (FC1).

…[T]he only reason that there's any kind of genealogy information there is that one of their librarians is an amateur genealogist, and has kind of built it up...it very much strikes me that without him, [the] library wouldn't have such a facility. (FB2)

It's sad...when a place that has some history, nevertheless the local library doesn't really seem to have got anyone who's enthusiastic enough to really develop the local studies section... (FC2)

Participants also reaffirmed the need for remote access to these materials; FB2 noted that any local studies materials he would be using would not be local, but from the areas his grandparents originated.

8.3   *Examining Local Studies Websites*

Participants both in the shadowing exercise and focus groups were involved in assessing and examining local studies websites (3.7.3, 3.7.4). Shadowing took place first chronologically, and was a much more general exploration; subsequently, focus group participants were given more guidance to assess the sites in particular areas, and had further opportunity to discuss their findings with other group members. Thus, group participants contribute much more in this area, but other material is included where appropriate. In total 65 sites (Appendix 24) were evaluated, and anonymised comments are listed in Appendix 25. What should be stressed here is that previously some participants were both prior **users** and **non-users** of local studies websites, giving a wide range of perspectives from the family history researcher community. Group members were keen to personalise their search within the e-local studies resources wherever possible. FB1 wondered if she had "any relatives in these areas, so I could do something quite practical with them". Shadowees were given at least one site relevant to their personal research, although this was not attempted with the groups. However, most were keen to make the exercise as purposeful as possible, seeking surnames of interest within relevant searchable resources found (FB3; FF3; 4, 5).

> *I felt that, if I wanted to find something out in that particular local studies/local history library, I would go back and make a personal hunt there. In fact I did, I did…if I'd had something particular for the others, I would have been interested to see…* (FF5)

Some of the identified researcher characteristics earlier described are illustrated here: where researchers stow away information for future use; always on the lookout for potential connections; and establishing personal connections with places (6.9). Several participants commented that having a personal interest in the area made it easier to search and evaluate the site, giving a more realistic element. This reality was also applied to timescales, and the time given to the resource assessments. It was stated that there wasn't always "a limitless amount of time" to work on their research, and "therefore I wasn't going to waste too long. I

thought - if I was trying to find it, what would I do?" (FF2). FB1 also noted that "sometimes that's the reality of it". Others made clear they "stuck with" the resources longer than they would "in reality", taking longer to assess these sites and find information than they would if they were searching for their own research. FF3 noted this was "a factor to bear in mind with the Internet, because of what it is. People want an instant answer and are not prepared, as you would be if you went into a physical building to spend hours looking for what you want - you want the answer straight in front of you, within a few seconds". This highlights the danger when (potential) users begin looking for information, and fail to find that which is "buried" out of sight.

> *If it's not apparent on the landing page, I'm gone…especially if there were several hits on Google search... if it doesn't say "history" or genealogy" or similar…that's it.* (FD1)

This mirrors what practitioner LS10 tells us, that sites need to increase their accessibility in order to begin to fully realise their promise. Users are assessing relevance; seeing whether the information is appropriate and useful to them. "If it is a first visit I will try and assess just what is of value. If necessary I will return if it is warranted, when I may spend hours. But the initial visit will usually be say five to ten [minutes], unless it is something very large like *GENUKI*" (FD2). Indeed, initially when asked about future use and relevance of local studies sites (8.8), some participants dismissed the sites they had evaluated, associating something as potentially relevant only if it involved an area they were researching, as opposed to something that could be applied to areas of interest.

The majority of focus group members said they had no expectations of the local studies sites prior to their assessments, largely because of a lack of experience with use, although they reportedly found the exercise both "interesting" (FF5), and "an eye-opener" (FC3). One participant was particularly surprised at the quality of family history research guidance materials she found; "I think I was [surprised to find it there], yes. Just because it was so good. You might get signposted somewhere by a library, but I didn't expect a really good document there" (FB1). Those that did arrive with expectations appeared to assess sites based on previous experience with local studies, both with physical collections and websites. FG1 "did not have high expectations and that has been borne out from experience to date". Other participants also began assessing sites in this way as they

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progressed through the assessments. This is perhaps one reason for the range of quality being such a surprise to those who are familiar with one very good local studies site (8.2).

> *I did have high expectations because I'd been spoilt by Morayshire.* (FB1)

> *The Oxfordshire and the City of Westminster ones I was very impressed with - that was the sort of the thing I was expecting to find, perhaps slightly more than I was expecting to find, based on the Southampton one.* (FF2)

However, it became evident during the discussion that some inherent expectations were based on the location of the collection. Historical places such as Bath (FA1) were expected to have a lot more information about the locality, and relevant historical happenings, e.g. the Industrial Revolution in Barnsley (FC1). The same applied for sites with a larger national significance; "I expected this site to be a mine of information but was disappointed. I acknowledge that, as it says, 'It is a work in progress' but being a place of such national prominence I expected more" (FG1). There were also expectations in terms of website organisation and functionality; "But I do seem to remember thinking "well I'll give this 5 minutes, and if I don't find a obvious link in 5 minutes, there isn't one.…But I maybe have too high an expectation when it comes to these, this is a website, this should be obvious" (FB2). FB2 also mentioned that expectations had been raised from the level of electronic information available elsewhere; especially in terms of Scottish information, where researchers are "spoiled" by the near instantaneous availability of information from *ScotlandsPeople* and similar sites. This was observed by many practitioners (7.4, 7.8). He did also note that they were more geared towards this, "but that's what *ScotlandsPeople* do, and this is not what the council does". One relatively new researcher, S8[273], was particularly impatient for online information, and with mainly Scottish ancestors, would have been used to having information available online.

> *I do like this sort of thing though…it's a bit skinny, but it's a start. At least you've got a picture of what the town looked like, where the name comes from and so on. That's got interesting bits and pieces; nothing very meaty…I would want rather more than there is there;*

> *Photographic collection. BUT THEY'RE NOT ONLINE. Even if they're online with copyright written through them, that's something, but it's rather frustrating to be told that they have two million images and I can't have them;*

> *I appreciate that there are problems with indexing and allsorts, but…if I was looking for someone who worked in a Birmingham factory in 1900, I would be a bit annoyed at this stage. I think I'd be digging out Google and seeing what they had instead.* (S8)

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[273] S8 was aged 45-54 and had researched for less than one year.

It was unlikely S8 had experience of family history pre-Internet; therefore he and FB2 are the most likely of the participants here to be representative of the newer demographic group of researchers (4.3) beginning to be interested in family history research. These new researchers still keen for immediate access to information, although as FB2 had more research experience (1-4 years), he had less expectation for information availability, except perhaps with *ScotlandsPeople.*

All groups experienced difficulties in accessing local studies information in many of their assessments. FD2 noted that "there is no uniformity in the way to access genealogical information. In some cases it falls under the heading of local studies, but not always. In fact in some of the libraries it was found under more than one description with little or no cross reference". As discussed in the previous chapter, there are local authority issues at play here in tandem with local studies (and these have been themed here as such). Thus, there will be design and structural elements that libraries and local studies will have no control over (7.7). This is not always obvious to patrons, and very few made the distinction. "I don't think it's right to lay all the blame with the library or archive - it is a council website. You've got to get so much into this pyramid - you're building the hierarchy from the word go" (FF1). What was very evident from all discussions was an element of amazement at the variations in quality found between sites, both in terms of content and ease of access to the information. "What surprised me was the difference across the board. You know, some put quite a lot of effort into it, others couldn't have cared less…I mean, not even to have a direct link to the libraries, I find that very strange" (FC1). As discussed above, users assessed sites against each other, finding "some were excellent...but more were difficult if not impossible to drill down to something meaningful" (FE1). However, they did acknowledge the effort and commitment required from local studies staff to build a quality e-resource and make it visible, showing "some acknowledgement of the interest in local history" (FF5) and making sure they were "up-front…and straight through" (FC2) in terms of their communication.

8.4   Council Website Elements

Following discussions in Chapter 7, all the issues raised by participants concerning e-local studies were identified and coded as either council or local studies-related, in both positive and negative contexts (Appendices 26 and 27). The most significant council-related issue for participants was, in both positive and negative terms, navigation, highlighting how crucial it is to the user experience. As will become evident in the following discussion, navigation, council structure and terminology are inextricably interlinked here.

> *I think the thing...was the difficulty in finding out what the thing we were looking for was [a] called, and [b] what heading it was under… it's probably just the name of the department it happens to come under in that particular council, rather than looking at it as one should do, from the point of view of the end user, what would they be looking for, and indexing it correctly* (FF4)

As previously discussed (7.3), the structure of the local authority appears to dictate the structure of their website. Focus group FF concluded that the route to local studies information lay in the name of the department in the local authority hierarchy (FF4). They identified that they were "dealing with websites set up by computer nerds" (FF5), possibly as a demonstration of their own ability (FF4); and the site was structured this way, rather than designed with consideration for the end user (FF1). A similar discussion took place in a number of other groups, but this issue/realisation was not universally identified. But more importantly, do users care? Should they need to care? As FF4 notes above, in an ideal situation they should not, but unless local studies have the resources and expertise to take their site elsewhere, it is likely that the same problems will remain.

Sites were not "very intuitive" (FF3), with little consistency "about what heading it came under" (FF4), both in terms of local history/local studies/family history/genealogy, but also in terms of the diversity of service titles (7.1, 7.2) and department structures. Participants managed to identify, by default and process of elimination the kinds of headings that local studies materials tended to be under, e.g. leisure (FF3), "Communities, Leisure and Culture...History" (FF5);. FD1 was "danged" if he would remember he came through community and living; FF4 was "***always looking for archives or libraries you see, rather than leisure...***I don't think of it as leisure, its hard work!" This is difficult for a worldwide audience: "well I don't know that, I'm sure other people aren't going to know that globally, and it's a global resource" (FF1); "who on earth, doing family history, would have thought

to click on environment?!" (FC2). FB1 felt that finding "local studies was difficult - was it leisure and culture, or was it lifelong learning, or something else? I wasn't sure about that. And everything stated library this, library that, so you can't see… If you're hurrying, you're dashing to go out, it's difficult". This is clearly a significant barrier to locating local studies information.

In one case, FC3 observed "the library section was easy to find, but the local studies section wasn't". After trying the A-Z, libraries and local history, library facilities, archives and local studies, and access to records, FC2 concluded there "might have been a way into some information, but I really couldn't find it". On another site, he found "nothing to really guide you on the front page as to where you might go - you had to guess". This contrasts with sites where "there was a libraries and archives link on the landing page, so I was easily able to find it" (FD1). Some sites offered a "variety of routes to local studies" (FD2); this was complimented where it existed (FF). However, even where navigation is straightforward, S6 noted:

> I think you actually have to have quite a high level of literacy to actually navigate your way around some of these sites. It's awful kind of circular - it doesn't really give you a lot of information, it sends you round in circles a lot, you know. And you need to get kind of psychic to actually get the limited information that they've got - I mean it's just taking you back to where you were. It's not giving you anything. (S6)

FB3 "got stuck in a loop...about getting permission for a child to use computers, and I couldn't get out!"; similarly FF2 "tried family history, local history, genealogy, history, archives, and all of them took me back to the lifelong learning [courses]". FF1 also encountered "redundant pages on the route instead of a direct link". FF2 was irritated to have been directed from the A-Z "to the advert for Tyne Bridge Publishing, considering this "a bit of a cheek, to expect to get something else and find yourself back there". FD2 felt it was a pity access to materials wasn't easy, as "there is some good stuff"; likewise FF1 found "a lot of useful stuff...[i]t was getting there in the first place". Participants were finding information almost by accident:

> I think we can congratulate ourselves on having found it in the first place. It wasn't anywhere near the front, the home page, and I got there not through a library search [or Education and Learning]...so I just did a search on Local History and it came up with a list, number 4 of which was [the] History Centre. But if I hadn't got down to number 4 on the list of possible hits, I wouldn't have known about it. (FC2)

Similarly, FC2 "eventually got through [to Gateshead] with the bar at the top, which I didn't see because it didn't draw attention to itself...Once you got to local history it actually had quite a good site, but I think 5 out of 10 wouldn't have made [it there]". Participant S5, who appeared highly information and genealogically literate, frustratingly didn't stay interested for long enough to find local studies. Gateshead is one of the most highly regarded local studies sites by practitioners (Reid 2003, LS10; 7.8). If navigation routes are too complicated, there is the danger that users will give up ("If I have to work hard to find it on a site like this, I'm gone" (FD1)), and never discover the information that is there.

Taking into account the diversity of council structures and organisational set-ups, the local studies connections with libraries are still strong (7.2, 8.2). In many cases where local studies are located outside libraries in the website structure, there was a "lack of ability to go backwards out of things" (FC1), and users had to return 'home' first (7.3). "[The history centre was excellent], once you got to it...You wouldn't have known it was there....I got to Step 2, using the Internet, and all of a sudden it comes up with [X] History Centre. Why didn't you say that before? For heaven's sake, that's what I want to know about!" (FC2). As reported in 7.3, in several cases local studies are not accessible from libraries, one issue from structure re-organisations where local studies have often been combined with other heritage services. "The homepage for [the] history centre said that "we're bringing together the borough museum and local history library". But if they're bringing in the local history LIBRARY, it would have been useful to have a link through from libraries. Which was the point I was making previously - they've just not got thinking beyond the box, have they?" (FC2). Both FD2 and FG1 found it "frustrating" when a site had 3 or 4 separate lots of local history information, all unlinked; FC2 was pleased to see one LA celebrating local history month, but not subsequently linking through from this to local studies.

FF1 commented that sites "did all have a search engine of some sort, so if you couldn't find the most obvious, or what you thought should have been the most obvious route, the search engines were there on all of them to start looking that way". However, authority search engines, as implied above, were not always effective in finding relevant information, often additionally searching large volumes of council documentation. FA4 found "500 matches for

library", FA3 returned 280 hits for local studies which were "all irrelevant!" as they were "documents where local studies was referred to" (FA1). FB3 highlighted "searches for local studies bring up documents where it is discussed, not necessarily a route to it". He suggested this could be improved with authorities using a customised *Google* search on their websites. However, success with the search engine and the resultant user impression of sites are again linked to the terminology in use. Users need to know and use the right search terms, whether genealogy/family history etc., leaving the same terminological problem as before; "when you put the word "genealogy" into the search box, nothing came up. Didn't know what the word was" (FA4); or conversely "I couldn't find local studies or family history...the only thing that I found it under was G for genealogy" (FC1); FG1 also reported use of the term 'local studies' was not prominently in use on an archives service home page.

Responses to other navigational elements, where present, were generally positive, and the opposite where missing. Site maps provided easier access (FB3); a "running side bar" eliminated the need to use the back browser button (FG2); and direct linking to LS from the LA homepage (FA5) were all winners. FB3 noted that breadcrumb trails would be very helpful in such complex structures: "you couldn't track where you'd got to sometimes... [f]or example, I was searching their online library, and when you come out of there, there's no obvious way back; you've got to go right back to the front page, that's the only way you can get out of it". Similarly, FF3 felt that most sites "didn't have enough shortcuts...I had to go click click click click click click right through", with no way to bypass the overarching structure.

Despite instructions given to the focus group (and shadowees), they "tended to go into these sites using the search box, rather than try and navigate through" (FA2). Anecdotal evidence suggests users quickly revert to searching if they can't find what they are looking for, which also tallies with navigating by *Google* (5.5). Most initially attempted navigation, but "sometimes I gave up" (FA3). "I tried to go to libraries first, because that's what your instructions said, and then, if not I started putting in local studies or local history, because I thought that was more likely to come up that family history. And if I got a local history page I looked to see if there was a family history entry" (FA1). Likewise FF1 found himself "using the search engine or the A-Z most of the time"; FF2 also "tended to go quite quickly to the A-Z if I didn't immediately find [local studies]...and even then it's sometimes not as obvious as

one might have hoped". FB1 tried to "do what I'd normally do...I'd put in genealogy or family history. FF3 "tried clicking through on all the sites, and on some I could go all the way down to where I wanted to go, but others I was going so far, coming back, and some I found very difficult to navigate". Although not possible with group participants, it was recorded how shadowees approached locating local studies from the Authority homepage (Appendix 28). Approximately half LSHPs were reached by searching, and half by navigation (either by menu, or via an A-Z facility), although only 3 of the 11 shadowees managed to navigate for half or more of the sites. The majority were able to change navigation strategy if not getting anywhere.

This confusion with terminology and structure has had, in many cases, a negative effect on the internal visibility of local studies, making it extremely difficult to locate the information. "You have to know that it's in libraries, and then once you get to the library you have to look under library services, so you've got a couple of things to do first before you get family history or local studies" (FF5). FA5, after finding no relevant terms in the A-Z, eventually discovered "all the local studies scanned material, which was amazing...It wasn't easy to get to at all, and I'm used to doing that sort of thing!" As noted above (8.2), FA5 worked in the information profession, which further highlights this as a significant issue. If an information professional, aware of the terminological and organisational possibilities, is having difficulty finding local studies, the public cannot be blamed for becoming frustrated and moving on. Materials must be made more discoverable and visible. "Local studies...was buried" (FG1); "right at the very bottom" (FA3); and "all tucked away" (FA2). This supports further suggestions that you have really have to go looking for family history materials, an afterthought on local authority sites, creating the danger that "if I don't find things, I tend to kinda move on" (FB2). This is one of the problems arising from local studies being hosted within the parent local authority site; the 'council-ness' of it all.

I always find Council websites so fascinating because they're usually so awful!!!... I used to work for [X] Council, and we changed ours recently, and it went from being not terribly [good]... but it's now absolutely bloody awful!!! It actually looks appalling. The trouble is they want to give you so much information in your face, whereas you go onto commercial sites, they actually help you navigate through them. (S6)

FF1 was "irritated" by authority terminology and mission statements. "If you want information on your council tax its right there in big bold letters [whereas LS is] an

afterthought" (FB2). FF5 similarly noted "the most important thing is telling people how to complain, where to go to get rent rebate, how to get their bins emptied. Libraries are very low, and record offices are invisible". FC2 highlighted the advantage held by commercial enterprises, that "there's money behind them, and they have a singular purpose...and they've actually anticipated what the clients need to know"; and local authorities are reliant on the initiative of individual practitioners.

Although little discussion took place regarding the external visibility of accessed sites, the subject was touched on in more general terms. On search engine visibility: "I must admit it would be interesting to...*Google* genealogy and add a place name, and see where the council websites feature in the search results. Just to see if it's been properly indexed" (FB2). As noted by local studies benchmarking data (7.6), genealogy was not used much as a keyword by local studies sites, and therefore not ranking as highly, or returning a result at all. As can be seen here, this is still being used by researchers, and thus should still be considered, at least as a keyword, metatag, or somewhere in the page text (Blachman n.d.). FC2 also noted that in the evaluations, participants were "starting off with the council's home page, which might not actually be the way that you would start off. You might actually *Google* Greenwich Library or something. That may not be of any value, but maybe you can cut out the middleman of the local authority homepage". This tallied with significant proportion of participants who report that they navigate and discover new resources using *Google* (5.5).

Local government re-organisation (1.3) is another relevant issue (Dewe 2002b), in that users may not immediately know which local authority area to search in. FB3 discussed a map presented on one site: "it has the towns... you click on Preston and it has the details of Preston. But it doesn't tell you the towns that are NOT on there. And you say to yourself, isn't Manchester in this area somewhere? And of course it's not on there, because Manchester's a different local authority...But with local authority boundaries changing and so on and so forth, why would you know?" FB2 commented further that there were now "bits of Lanarkshire in Glasgow, bits of Lanarkshire in Lanarkshire, bits of Lanarkshire in Ayrshire", and so on. Remote users, particularly those overseas, may be further impeded by a lack of knowledge of all, or a particular part of the UK (FG1). FD1 also noted "but someone from outside might not get that right away [like me]". Co-operation and signposting

between authorities, and more references to surrounding places (7.6) may help in this respect.

Design and presentation were largely considered satisfactory, and only really discussed where there was a problem with them. Large readable print was considered important (FB1; FE1), as was a "clear and concise layout" (FG1) with "no clutter, you can look and read it without straining your eyes" (FA2). They preferred "colourful [and] attractive", with links incorporated into the text, rather than presented at the bottom out of context (FC3). Authority homepages were not always the most welcoming. "The landing page reminds me of a large advert page so I'm kind of trying to avoid looking...[Another had] a cranky looking little girl on it...There is nothing to explain what things are...I wouldn't stay in here at all; if you hadn't been wanting me to look I'd be gone" (FD1). S10 felt one was "not a very professional looking...but the information is the important thing "; users are prepared to struggle through with a website if it holds really good content.

FD2 offers a summary of the main issue; "navigation is an important problem requiring solution. None of the libraries we examined were really easy to navigate. There must be multiple ways of accessing the data, e.g. family history; genealogy; ancestors are all possible search terms. One thing that appeared to be lacking in all of the sites was the use of hyperlinks to allow ready access to information in other areas. With the above in mind I feel that libraries will have to be flexible in the way they display their resources on the Internet. No one solution is likely to fit all libraries, and with time there will be further need for change based on usage, and new and expanding facilities".

8.5   *Local Studies Elements*

In addition to online content, and perhaps more importantly in the eyes of some, users are looking for general transparency and clarity of communication, especially with regards to collection description information; "if they can tell you what papers they've got and what the dates are, that's really useful I think. You know you've either got to visit there or perhaps pay out some money to get somebody to look for you (FA1). Similarly FA5 "liked that [sites] said "this is what we have, this is what we don't have", so that you knew straight away

whether it was going to help you or not". In one case FB3 found the pages themselves didn't give much information, but then discovered "2 downloadable leaflets, PDF documents, which were actually very informative". Obviously the more information given about a collection the better, but it must be clear and straightforward. "There were some things that actually looked like they were about to deliver useful information, but were in fact just the information sheets of what their holdings were (FF2). Although these were useful in and of themselves, users can get tetchy if sites do not deliver what is expected.

As explored in 7.3, there was a lack of description in some cases. "They'd a lot about the type of material that was held, but it was just the type" (FB1). Participants felt that to really give enough information about the collection, sites needed to be much more specific. "I couldn't even find what was available with regards of a local studies collection" (FC3). "They only appeared to have partial census holdings, and they didn't tell me whether they existed in transcript, index or film or whatever...they didn't give you any formats of what they had" (FF3). FF4 discovered "A Guide to Holdings", but it was really just subject headings, and didn't nearly get down to document level...really pretty poor; likewise "type only" (FC1). In one case, when not able to find much description of a local studies collection's holdings, FB3 found a far more extensive description on *GENUKI*. From an information organisation, that is extremely disappointing and counterintuitive. Even if no money is available for resource creation, which there may well not be, collection description is fundamental, especially with the demise of *Familia* (7.8). "One thing that annoyed me was 'this department holds a wealth of information'; didn't say where the heck it was! Or what it was!" (FC2) This is unhelpful for local users, let alone remote.

Clarity is needed as to whether resources are searchable online. FB3 observed "it said all are available in the archive search rooms, and some are available on this website, but it didn't say which ones". He also wanted information for how to travel to collections by various methods (parking etc.; FB3). If services are advertised, and researchers are encouraged to plan a visit, there needs to be clear information in all cases. Service information, such as contact details/opening times, was largely present, but sometimes left something to be desired in terms of easy access. "In fact I don't even think it had the opening hours…well I couldn't find them (FF2). FB3 "came across a thing that said 'please contact us if you do not

see what you require; use the number at the bottom of the page' or something like that. There were NO numbers at the bottom of the page! You had to go right back to home, find where the central library was and then use the central library address". Watts (2006) found collection descriptions were more commonly present than basic contact details. Out-of-date information was also sometimes encountered; "they irritated me also by referring to the St Catherine's House Index[274] - when did they last blooming find out where it actually was?!" (FF3). There were similar findings in the benchmarking study, particularly with outdated links, most obvious with *1837online*, which had become *FindMyPast* at least 18 months previously (7.5, 7.7).

OPACs appeared to be a fundamental expectation by participants, and (particularly by FF) considered highly.

> *But certainly the fact that the catalogue is available online is immensely useful, although the documents themselves aren't;*
>
> *But I think, I would keep coming back to cataloguing...[X] had no online catalogue themselves, and a mere 500 records are indexed on Archives Network Wales[275]...[that] isn't very good I think;*
>
> *It gives you the accession number, the title, a brief précis of what's contained in it, its date, and I think that's absolutely excellent...you couldn't wish for better than that (FF4).*

FF1 was very positive regarding catalogues amalgamated with other heritage services, which "came up with a combined list of everything, and it was very clear which office held which document"; "When you actually clicked on them, you got a lot more details about it, and when the collections had been donated, and who had donated it, and what it was about, and some of them were fascinating" (FC1). Some catalogues were confusing, requiring (or appearing to require (by FA2 and 4, whereas 1, 3 and 5 gained access) users to log in before information can be accessed (FD2). Similarly, FB3 and FC1 both encountered databases with a "cryptic approach" (FB3) and unclear instructions. There was an awareness of the need for retrospective cataloguing within many authorities; "most have not digitised their catalogue which is quite a cost liability for many authorities" (FG1.

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[274] St. Catherine's House was a former home of the Civil Registration Index Books for England and Wales.
[275] *Archive Network Wales* (now *Archives Wales)* is the Welsh equivalent of *A2A*.

Paid research services were generally well received. "I like it when research is offered; although it is expensive, at least you know they are willing. The sites that say they won't do research puzzle me; I feel it should be part of why they are online" (FE2), a similar view to local studies practitioners (7.2, 7.3). For the most part, participants were in favour of authorities charging for research, as long as they were up-front and transparent (FA). "If the local authority wants to make a bit of cost-covering out of it, that's the way to do it, if they're honest about how much it's going to cost. We'll give you 15 minutes free, after that it's £30 an hour, something like that" (FA2); although FE1 felt "their prices were quite expensive!!!" There was a similar need for a clear up-front charging policy for other services; "It's just things like there might be a charge, but it doesn't say how much it is...this is geared at folk living [locally] trying to access it...you could be in Auckland trying to access this, and you want a bit more information than what they're giving you" (S6). Likewise:

FA1   *And maybe the reverse - if you were saying that people had replied to you and said they hadn't got the resources, if that's the case, then say. "These things are available for people to look at, but we unfortunately don't have the resources to deal with individual enquiries."*

FA2   *Basically tell us what you can do and what you can't do.*

Ordering and paying for this (and other services) online was particularly appreciated by overseas participants. Focus group members were far more open to the ideas of research services than shadowees. S8 and S10 both held sceptical views on these, but this was perhaps because they were largely in a position to visit relevant repositories themselves.

In terms of e-local studies content, clarity and transparency was again an issue. It was felt by some participants that local studies often appeared to offer something they didn't; "My first impression of [X] was that it looked as if it was going to be quite good, but it didn't deliver on the promise" (FF2). S7 felt sites often "word it badly; they kind of give you the impression that they've got the information online, but when you hit the button you end up at something that tells you where you can look at it in person. Which is a disappointment if you happen to be at the other end of the country and are trying to do something about it". FC2 felt local studies claims of relevance outside their local area slightly "over-egg the pudding" and tended to be illusory, although this was not universally accepted. These concerns aside, there were generally very positive reactions to the content that was there.

[A]nd through the "History of Reading" link came across all the Local Studies scanned material, which was amazing.…photographs, maps, plans…A complete directory, so you could look people up in the directory - masses, I was really amazed. It was great; if I'd people in Reading I would have been laughing! (FA5) (Although not found by anyone else, 8.4)

...some amazing things like you could search the police records of people who were in the police up until 1925 in Lancashire; quite amazing considering I've been trying to find a policeman who was in Liverpool, there was no way you could find that out. (FB3)

I liked that, it was more into the social history. If I was doing it at my leisure for a purpose, I'd be looking at how people lived, where, and I would look at that kind of thing. (FB1)

[It] had different coloured boxes depending on what sort of information they had, and you could home in on a village that they had information on - that was really good, (FB3)

I thought the Libindx in Moray was amazing. And so much information. (FA5)

Notable content mentions by participants included: a downloadable newspaper index, digitised documents; a local history discussion board; a police records database, church register index; images and photographs; MIs; newspapers; local history information; and general interactivity. Entire resources highlighted were: *Cottontown*[276]; *Lancashire Lantern*[277]; *Libindx*[278]; and *Revolutionary Players*[279]. Users were also particularly keen on things that were searchable, exploiting the power of the Internet (FF1). FE1 found digital images of the register of bodies [from the Tay Bridge Disaster] and articles recovered "fascinating reading"; likewise FF5 highlighted a postcard gallery and historic photos, which are "always good for local history". FF1 liked digitised sample documents from a collection on their website. Some confusion arose regarding the contents of a particular database: "the actual scope of the database wasn't described, so you didn't know whether this complemented or overlapped with the other stuff"(FB3). FF2 encountered information sheets "that were there twice. They were once clearly identified as information sheets, and then you had other links that said things like censuses, and lo and behold you got back to the same information sheets! There was me expecting something more specific or general, or something different entirely", but found a repeat of the same material.

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[276] Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, 2011. *Cottontown* [online] Available at: http://www.cottontown.org/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[277] Lancashire County Council, 2011. *Lancashire Lantern* [online] Available at: http://www.lantern.lancashire.gov.uk/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[278] Moray Council, 2011. *Libindx* [online] Available at: http://libindx.moray.gov.uk/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

[279] Birmingham City Council, 2011b. *Revolutionary Players* [online] Available at: http://www.revolutionaryplayers.org.uk/ [Accessed 3 August 2011]

FB1 felt the provision of subscription databases for patrons was "a good way of going about things"; access to the *Online Britannica* and the *Times Archives* were described as highly useful (FC1; FF1; 7.3, 7.5, 8.6). FF3 described postings on the *soc.genealogy* notice board 5 years previously, giving details of American libraries that gave remote access to *Ancestry* and other widely unavailable databases, but had not locked this down for members only. FA1 noted that more UK Libraries were now providing free access to *Ancestry Library Edition*, even if only in-house. FF3 similarly "made a point of looking on all [local studies sites], whether *Ancestry* was available, via the library edition, and mostly it was". FB1 was unaware of *Ancestry Library Edition* until this exercise, and resolved to ask her local authority to subscribe. User instruction was also remarked on positively where present: "I thought the booklets were good too…My boss has just started on this, and I wouldn't have looked at a library for [*Family Trees and how to grow them*]; I would have looked at a family history society, rather than a library for that…I was impressed (FB1). FC1 discovered a downloadable booklet about tracing your family history with "a lot of information or advice on the hows and wheres of things", both online and in the relevant collection. As Reid (2003) thought, genealogists were often keen to develop into local history. "I thought it was sweet, the 'Tracing the History of your House'. If people have run out of family history, there's something else you can do, and you might just be interested in that. You might think "Oh, that's interesting, how do I go about that?" (FC1).

Navigation was also considered as part of users' evaluation of site content. FF3 observed "some of the worst websites you can actually get results to you easier than you can from some of the better sites". Likewise, FF4 noted "There is a real problem; I've designed simple websites for other people, and there is a real problem with communication". In some cases, users felt completely patronised by less than appropriate attitudes portrayed through pages (FC2); "but the killer for me was, on one of the PDF documents it said "family history may be time-consuming and costly"; tantamount to saying GO AWAY!!! I know it can be costly, but I still want to do it!" (FF1). Internal links between related areas (although partly council-related) were seen as very effective. "Link right there on the homepage" (FA5); quick links into the library, into the archives and into local studies (FB1); "heaps of links to other places on the website, for example they linked to the section that dealt with house ownership, which was great" (FB3). And conversely, "what really frustrated me was there were a lot of potential links and they all lead to the same accessibility and eligibility page" (FC1). As FC3

noted earlier, links were better in the text than separately. "I didn't know, because it was quite a long page, that those links were at the bottom, so by the time I'd got there I'd lost interest". External links (where present) were highly valued and discussed in a positive light, and were described most frequently as "helpful" or "useful" (FA1, 2; FD1). FC1 felt links were vital for resource discovery: [there were] "links to Catholic sources, Jewish sources, the War Graves Commission…Because unless you know about the War Graves Commission, unless somebody tells you, you never find out about it"; they also stated their intention "to go back to that site and go through it because there were a lot of links". FB3 was likewise in praise of one site highlighting their digitised holdings in *Historical Directories*: "it's useful that there's a link to that, because people often say they have directories, but they don't say that they're digitised anywhere else!" Some sites were noted for their lack of links. "In looking at the sites you asked for comment on I do not recall seeing any mention of, or links to, county or local historical/archaeological societies of which there is a great number" (FG1). FB1 further emphasised that "links are important…that's why some of my favourite websites are my favourites, because they have good links and I can find them there".

Those e-local studies resources that participants felt were most useful were mostly digital images: "those photographs…the background that they gave. I thought that was the best out of the whole lot" (FC3); "Photographs and newspaper reports of local historic events and social history of the area" (FG1). Reid (2003) highlights their particular success and suitability. FC2 found "House History" instructional information very helpful; she also commented that she would look for links to local studies or local history on an authority's home page. Results on a personal level were also particularly valued (FD2; FE2; FF4, 5; FG2). "They actually had databases [and indexes] one could use. Most useful to me were cemetery and burial records info...maps, both old and new, historical events pertinent to the place and links to external sites for more information". FC2 felt having resources that were a "complete thought-through process" would be most useful.

8.6   User Experience

Group FB in particular keenly explored funding and membership issues within services, in both local and remote contexts. "Do they have to put the council tax up in order to [digitise materials]?" (FB3). "I suppose the bottom line is that the people paying the council tax can

still get in and look at the material here" (FB1). FB3 wondered e-local studies was a requirement, and further questioned the feasibility of maintaining and regularly updating sites, and how their effectiveness is measured. "There's a whole change in the way libraries are being used. It's a different ball game". FE2 also speculated "if libraries in general have a mandate to provide local studies info [online]? I would not have thought so, and many of them likely do not have the resources to offer much". FB2 felt funding of popular services was prioritised, which didn't really include websites; FG2 similarly remarked "It's difficult to balance for normal rate paying facilities and research I guess. When the larger sites provide the info it's hard to justify the local stuff".

Local and remote divides were raised further in terms of remote access to online databases. "One thing that irritated me was, and I know why they do it, they had access to the Times Archives, but you had to be a member of the library…So, I was delighted and then instantly frustrated, because I can't access it" (FF1). This was quite an understandable feeling, but FF1 was unaware his *own* local library authority subscribed and offered access to the database in question. FA4 and FD2 found that some catalogues could not be searched without membership: "some of the libraries did not allow catalogue access to remote users; for remote users the ability to access and search online to produce downloadable data is key" (FD2). FD2 also noted that there were "some UK libraries [Bedford]" which permitted membership to non-residents. Similar frustrations occurred where items could only be reserved prior to a visit if you were a member of the library (FF5).

Participants had both positive and negative experiences of trying to obtain information remotely. D23 experienced "very helpful email communications" with York Archives regarding court records, whereas FA2 had written to a branch library following a reference in a local newspaper, enclosing an SAE, and was quite annoyed that no response was received. "Most of them are a bit curt sometimes: 'we don't have the resources, we can't do it, thank you for your interest', which is fair enough" (FA2); "I did try to contact...Medway, about this [ancestor], and someone actually phoned me and said she would find out as much as she could, but unfortunately…But she did put me in touch with a couple of other people online" (FA4). Users appear to equate a quality website with a quality service, and are surprised when this is not the case (FF3), particularly with the procedures involved in

remotely obtaining photocopies or other information from collections. The following narrative illustrates the pursuit of an enquiry by FF4, who discovered a document concerning an ancestor in during the investigation of one of the local studies e-resources.

> [T]hey wouldn't take any order over the phone; they wouldn't give me a price over the phone. What I had to do was write to them, setting out the details of the document I want. I should point out this is a single piece of paper I'm trying to get hold of - one letter. I've got to ask for an estimate, they will sent that back to me, and then if I'm happy I've got to send them the money, and then they will send me the document....

He felt let down and frustrated after "an easy-to-use site and good cataloguing", comparing his experience with a previous interaction with an overseas archive, where "within half an hour I had an email back saying 'we'll put it in the post today, no charge'!" This highlights user frustrations that can occur when processes are not 'all joined up'. An excellent catalogue exposes the material held by the service, and users expect the whole service to "flow" as easily. FF4 also commented that the site was one of the better designed ones, "but if you can't get what you want, then that spoils it all, doesn't it?" (FF3). They make comparisons with other libraries, local studies collections, archives, record offices and the *National Archives*; frustrated with discrepancies in membership requirements, copying requirements, etc., although it is likely these are expressions of frustration rather than anything they believed could be addressed by this research.

8.7   User Expectations and Recommendations

The group sessions culminated with a discussion exploring what participants felt they could reasonably expect from LSHPs, and how they would like to see sites develop in the future (Appendix 29). Where attributions have been given, generally one member in a group will have suggested something; there were no disagreements about these, except where perhaps some wanted holdings information in more depth than others. What would these potential users expect as minimum e-service levels? Practical elements such as location, opening hours and contact details (FA5; FC1; FD1; FE2; FF2); the "what and where" of the collection (FC1), featured highly. An introduction to genealogy/family history (FD2), historical information on the local area (FD1); links (FD2); catalogue/more specified holdings list (FD1, 2; FF2, 4), and list of indexes (FG2). FC2 remarked "In a way it's interesting because what we're talking about is sometimes them telling us what they *don't* have. They might say, well, we don't

actually have parish registers, they're held in the county record office"; possibly saving a researcher a wasted trip.

Remote users wished for greater clarity for planning a trip. "Anything that cuts down time-wasting when you get to a place" (FC1). For this purpose, researchers need enough and better specificity, and catalogues/online indices play a significant part in that: "you're in Glasgow, you're considering a trip to Aberdeen, but you know beforehand it's going to be worthwhile, because you've seen the indexes online that can say that it's going to be worth the 300 mile round trip. Whereas, you could go a long way and discover that the information isn't really available" (FB2). For completely remote access, they expected a guaranteed reply to an enquiry (FA2; FD1; FF4); and straightforward instructions as to how to obtain information or use services remotely. "What is available for you to actually have from them, up on the front page; if you find something you require, this is how you would get it from us" (FF3). There is an important link here with ancestral tourism (Frazier 2001); Dumfries and Galloway Local Studies[280] are members of *Ancestral Scotlan*d's Ancestral Tourism Welcome Scheme[281], a *Visit Scotland*[282] initiative geared to meeting the needs of family historians visiting on research trips.

What would participants want from e-local studies in an ideal world? Participants constructed a wish list of what local studies might provide online, without consideration of financial and other constraints on the matter. Aside from the obvious request for full online access to all material (FB2; FF2), or the" ability to view (for immediate payment online) the document you think might be a help" (FG2); many felt there were "way beyond even a wish list" (FF2). Practitioners also noted that this was not a viable option (7.8). Most participants were still realistic and some of the suggestions are very doable, such as lists of holdings, or a separate local studies catalogue (FC2; FD1; FF4) in as much detail as possible. This should say "clearly what they have …if they don't have it on yet, links to who else might have it, doing signposting" (FB1). There should be clarification of where physical materials are

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[280] Dumfries and Galloway Council, 2011. *Local Studies, Archives and Family History* [online] Available at: http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2297 [Accessed 8 October 2011]
[281] Visit Scotland, 2011. *Ancestral Tourism Welcome* [online] Available at: http://www.ancestralscotland.com/plan/ancestraltourism-welcome-scheme/ [Accessed 8 October 2011]
[282] Scotland's national tourism organisation.

located, specifically stating what could be *remotely* accessed online (FB3). There should be obvious instructions for obtaining information remotely (FE2); a feedback facility (FB3); and contact details placed *with* the family history information (FB3; FC2).

The most popular requests for online content included: digitised parish registers (FA2, 4, 5; FC3; FD1); MIs (and/or online indexes) (FA4; FC1; FD1; FF1); and online databases pertinent to local area (FB2;FE1,2) such as biographies, local histories, obituaries; school rolls and histories, valuation rolls; voter rolls; and descriptions of local occupations. Photographs, of the local area and people, both past and present, were also popular (FA3, 5; FC1, 2; FF1), as were maps (FC1); links (FA1, 5; FD1); and online books (FC3). There should be family history instructive material (FA1; FD2) including referrals to other sources/repositories (FA5), alongside local history, social history, and other background historical information (FC1; FE1, 2). Ideally different levels of information should be provided for different experience levels of family historians (FD2). FD2 suggests this should include "[l]inks to specialized local sources which have FH info specialized information areas like local history available for online access; family history societies, register offices, special libraries, museums etc." They also sought links and collaboration with family history societies; and contact with local researchers (FB1; FE1; FG1).

There was a repeat of the desire for joined-up sites: "think, from the front page onwards where they're going to take you...not just local history, there's just so much information there that hasn't been organised and thought through" (FC2). Likewise, easy navigation (FC2; FD2; FE2); breadcrumb trails and a *Google* search facility (FB3) should all be present. These are elements that should not be appearing in a wish list; they are indicators of good quality resources (5.3), and something local studies, libraries (or heritage) and LA sites should aspire to. The fact they are appearing here as well as the minimum service requirements illustrates their importance to the user experience and how far from it some local studies and LA sites currently are. There were some suggestions of a goal of standardized access to services (FF1) and their availability (FB2). Although unlikely to happen, "it would be nice is to actually have consistency across the various authorities. Once you work it out on one website, you

can reliably go to the next website, follow the same procedure, and get to the equivalent information." (FF1).

Simplicity was a large factor in what group members felt e-local studies could take from commercial family history sites: "keep it simple, otherwise…the temptation is to get carried away with what you can do…The more complex you make it, the harder it is to find your way around it" (FA2). This was reflected through ease of database use; simplicity and clarity of design and layout (FA2); general visibility (FA1) and usability of navigation and signposting (FA2). Services, such as research services, should be highlighted and visible (FA3); but also as discussed in 8.5, transparent in their charging (FA1, 2, 3). "They need to make sure that people can find their way to that quickly…if they are going to try and make money out of people" (FA3). In terms of content, participants also felt that e-Local Studies should concentrate on what makes them unique:

> *Local sites have a unique perspective in that they are "local". To get a real feel for a place [especially for us long distance researchers] it's imperative to drill down to an almost personal level. Local studies have the advantage in that they can provide that kind of information.* (FE1)

> *Local studies sites should prioritise their efforts to provide information on what they hold that other sites do not have. All too often they regurgitate information about national records instead of concentrating on local history and events.* (FG1)

> *[M]ore about the history of the general area or specific databases that might be pertinent there...such as mining or mining disasters, voter rolls or valuations rolls.* (FE1).

Obviously the ability to search indexes and purchase related images online (FG1) would be highly advantageous, but images of sample documents also add "a lot to the overall attractiveness of a site, encouraging people, and it also says something, at a rather subtle level, about 'we're rather proud of the stuff we hold, we like other people to see it'" (FF4). FF4 also noted that information on context of collections was also important; the kinds of things individual collections hold and what types of research questions this might answer. Participants also recommended forming links with family history societies (FB1), and encouraged services to learn from each other's sites where others present information prominently and with easy access (FE1). This is a goal of the present research, with information dissemination through professional groups and channels.

Almost all focus group participants indicated that, following exposure to e-local studies, they would use sites again in their future research.

> *What I'm going to do is go rushing home to find the local studies where I've got people... which I wouldn't have done before today. Thank you!* (FC3)
>
> *I have had some positive experiences already and feel they are an under-used resource. In a sense I feel that if I could just dig a bit more I'd find some great stuff. I know it's out there, and I should be looking harder, but it would be nice if the sites made it easier for us to find things.* (FE2)

Their enthusiasm indicates that success with, and a positive exposure to, local studies may, more often than not, leads to repeat visits, as it does with favourite sites (5.4). "In the areas that I'm interested in, there may be vast amounts of information that I've got access to, sitting at home in my house, that I didn't realise I had before" (FA3). FE1 indicated they would "likely recall Dundee and Manchester and may recommend them to others if I learn of someone with interests in these geographical locations…you never know when something will come in handy!" However, some participants qualified their likelihood of future use, e.g. "not very often… [or] for something in particular" (FG2), and low on the priorities list (FE1). Only FD2 indicated that they were unlikely to return to a local studies site; however they were largely focused on a one-name study, and did not feel it practical to study a specific locality in detail.

Although participants want access to all records online, they know and understand why it's not, and are aware of at least some of the issues.

> *I think, particularly those of us who have been doing this for a number of decades, in spite of all the criticisms, it's still an awful lot easier to find stuff than it ever used to be [vocal agreement]. I think we need to keep that in perspective.* (FF4)
>
> *We're never going to be satisfied, but we are much better served now than we ever have been.* (FF3)

It is clear that local studies and online presences are valuable to these people, but more work needs to be done to improve visibility.

8.8   *Summary*

This chapter has explored user interactions with various e-local studies sites. As in Chapter 7, issues fell into both LA and local studies areas. Most importantly, not all participants were familiar with the term 'local studies'. Furthermore, they were confused by the differences in names, structures and organisations of council departments; clearly a barrier to local studies discovery and visibility. Equally, LA websites not structured in the way people naturally seek information. Issues of navigation, structure and terminology were all interlinked, with all experiencing difficulties in accessing local studies information. They found no uniformity, little or no cross-referencing, and users felt strongly sites must be clear and straightforward in their descriptions and presentation of services. Where e-content was encountered it was valued and well thought of, especially materials that could be searched and interacted with. However, users felt some sites implied they had more information online than was actually the case; information about information instead 'real' useable online information. Variations in quality are off-putting and a small discouragement, but FE1 indicated "I'll be likely to at least check some more of them out in the future before condemning them". In spite of these issues, participants valued the importance that these unique local materials to bring to their research. In the current economic climate local studies is unlikely to be able to fulfil wish lists proposed by both (potential) users and practitioners (7.8): a prudent attitude would be for services to do what is possible, add as much value as they can; aiming as high as possible above minimum service levels.

What I had been doing is trying to find people first. Now I'm at the stage where I'm trying to fill in a bit more, more things - where they lived, what the land looked like, what jobs they had, political situations. (S2)

9.1   *Introduction and Methodological Reflections*

On reflection across the entire research design, the study's methodology and data collection operated largely successfully; although, there are some elements that would benefit from minor alterations. In terms of a PhD research project, the investigation was too large in terms of the volume of data generated. This impacted greatly on the time required for analysis. The diary study made a particular contribution to this, and in future it might be beneficial to have a target number of sessions rather than participants. However, despite its large volume, the data produced had remarkable richness and depth, and was extremely valuable in creating the picture of the family history research experience (Chapters 5, 6). Further checking of the HTML and PHP code within the survey webpage would have been advisable, in order to increase the chances of discovery of the coding error before the instrument went live (3.7.1). Luckily, the question affected did not have a large bearing on the investigation, but this might not have been the case. Both User investigations of local studies online materials (shadowing and focus groups) involved participants beginning from the LA homepage. It is now apparent that this would be unlikely to be a users' entry point to the website, as was noted by members of the focus groups (8.4). Piloting of section C of the shadowing exercise might have discovered this issue (3.7.3); however, this did further highlight the problems of Local Authority website navigation (8.4). It would also have been beneficial to assess certain benchmarking metrics (particularly Accessibility) in a more meaningful way (3.8, 7.7).

In identifying elements that could be improved, we must also reflect on aspects of the methodology which were particularly successful. Despite scepticism in the literature (Bell 1999 amongst others), the diary study was extremely successful in soliciting multiple types

of data from a committed population, and a high level of engagement with participants was observed throughout. Assessments of local studies websites were undertaken by both users and, crucially, non-users, giving valuable insights into both sets of views on the content discovered. However, the major strength of the study is the innovative methodology, designed to meet the needs of the study and fully fit for the purpose of studying the phenomena under investigation, fulfilling the aims and objectives (1.5, 3.3).

Following on from the presentation of findings, this chapter reflects and offers discussion on these, placing them within the context of other literature where appropriate. Commentary and discussion are presented in a parallel order to findings, beginning with the family historian user population, and their interactions with resources. From the earlier identified categories of user research behaviour a model has been developed and is presented here. This is followed by discussion of findings relating to local studies, and of user interactions forthwith.

9.2 User Population

The user survey (Chapter 4) was of an exploratory nature, designed to identify and illustrate the user population at the time of execution. As a result, direct comparisons cannot be made with other literature; however studies of genealogists and family historians, where results are publicly available, will be compared where appropriate. Many are not recent and subsequently do not address the topic of the Internet, nor share the same delivery medium. Also, the studies were conducted in different areas of the world. The female response of 61.7% (4.3) in the present research was affirmed by all comparable literature, which also observed a higher incidence of females compared to males. Presences of females ranged from 57% (Gardiner 2004), to 72.5% (Drake 2001) and 73% (Frazier 2001); although they are more dominant, the exact breakdown is highly variable. Are females more proactive or willing to take part in surveys and research? Drake gathered her responses over a week (Drake 2001), so it may be that women were more responsive within that short period. Internet research company Nielsen//NetRatings (2005) splits the UK audience of the "genealogy category" of websites at 55% men and 45% women, also highlighting that "the proportion of women logging on to do family history has increased by 9% [in the previous year]...a bigger shift

than the overall online population, where the number of women online increased by 6% in the same time period". Does the Internet make family history more accessible to men? Are men becoming more interested? Indeed, both may be true.

In the case of respondents' ages, findings are not directly comparable due to differences in age bracketing. Drake (2001) for example, grouped respondents' ages in 20s, 30s, 40s, etc.; finding most cases heavily concentrated in the 40s, 50s and 60s, with only 10.7% of respondents falling under the age of 40. From the present results, it seems likely that there has been an increase in younger researchers engaged with family history compared to what has been found in other studies.

> *Ancestry.com.au managing director Josh Hanna said 38 per cent of people using the website were in the 15-to-24-year-old age bracket. "The number of users aged 35 and under grew significantly last year, which really challenges the stereotype that family history research is a hobby practised by retirees".* (Saurine 2007)

Those over 45 also dominate in other studies. The average age found by Sinko and Peters (1983) was 47.9, and approximately 40% of Frazier's (2001) respondents were aged 50-64. Kuglin (2004) found 87% of her genealogists were 51 or above, but she surmised that this extraordinarily high percentage was due in part to the paper-based delivery. Lambert (1996) observed "while less than 7 percent of the sample were under the age of 40, 29 percent were 60-69 and another 27 percent were 70 or over". Gardiner (2004), surveying genealogists in Staffordshire, used the most comparable age bands to the present research. With the exception of having no respondents under 25, she reported an almost identical distribution to that shown in Figure 4.2 (4.3). It does seem that between the period of Drake and Frazier's studies and Gardiner's research (2001-2004), a younger people have become more prevalent. This correlates with the rapid increase in UK e-content: the *1901 Census*, *Genes Reunited*, *ScotlandsPeople*, and *Ancestry.co.uk* all appeared for the first time in 2002 (Christian n.d.; 1.3). It would be logical to assume that, with the increased availability of family history information on the internet, the hobby would attract new patrons who were prior internet users, and that these prior internet users are more likely to be younger people. What is not clear is if that is the only reason for the increase.

Women dominated in the earlier age groups, with a higher proportion of men in later years. Frazier observed a similar trend, commenting that the "age distribution of men and women reversed at the 50 year old point". Gardiner (2004) noted "a tendency...for interest in family history to be awakened earlier in men than in women"; however, this was not observed here. As discussed earlier, women outnumber men in the general UK population after the age of thirty, with the proportion reaching 3:1 at ninety (National Statistics n.d.). The dominance in both the literature and in the minds of the public, of older women pursuing an interest in genealogy and family history must in part be accounted for by these statistics, alongside the longevity element common in the pursuit of the hobby. The low proportion of older men results in large part from losses by death in the World Wars and other conflicts, but the population now reaching "old age" has not been affected in this way, resulting in a much increased proportion of men who may have time to take up and pursue family history research.

Rates of marriage were similar to Drake (2001), aside from a higher incidence of single persons (6.4%). This is likely explained by a larger proportion of younger researchers in the present study. The high incidence of respondents with no children was initially surprising; contrasting with Drake's study where only 13.5% were childless. The concentration of her respondents was likewise around 2 children, but there was a higher incidence of those with 4 or 5. Could this indicate a change in the sort of people becoming interested in family history? As alluded to above, the UK has followed a trend of decreasing birth rates, from 2.4 in the early 1970s to 1.8 in 2004 (National Statistics n.d.). This influences the discussion in two ways. Those without children may feel a greater need to connect with their roots. "The global fascination with genealogy and family trees may stem from the same psychological need to understand who we are in a world where identities can easily become blurred. Despite the changing nature of family life, perhaps we value those ties more than ever" (Easton 2007). Following on from this, it is also likely that younger, childless researchers have greater free time to pursue the hobby. Sinko and Peters (1983) had similar difficulties in determining conclusive results regarding education level. They eventually surmised that 58% had at least some education above school level, a similar proportion to that found here. There were a greater proportion of women to men in the school and undergraduate degree categories, which reverses elsewhere; Frazier (2001) noted a similar pattern.

Examining the data from UK respondents (4.4), England, despite having largest share, is relatively under-represented. Scotland, on the other hand, is relatively over-represented. The higher representation of those living in Scotland can be attributed in part to the Scottish origins of the research, and the higher level of promotion in the northern Scottish press. However, do these explanations account for the entire difference? Do Scots have a greater sense of their identity than elsewhere in the UK? Is genealogy just more popular in Scotland? Relative to their respective home populations, again many more ex-patriot Scots (181) responded than English (354). There is much anecdotal evidence that Scots abroad, whether expatriate or with Scots heritage, are much prouder and more aware of a Scottish cultural identity than Scots in Scotland. Again the imbalance may partly relate to the Scottish origins of the research, and any resultant further distribution of the survey by local respondents.

Recent growth in the popularity of genealogy is evident from the fact that over half the respondents had begun their family history research within the previous 5 years. A much higher proportion of "early" stage family historians (researching for less than a year) is evident in this group compared to other studies: 19.2% in the present research compares to 3% (Gardiner 2004), 5% (Frazier 2001)) and 9% (Sinko and Peters 1983). This may illustrate of the delay between the commencement of genealogical research (now most likely on the Internet) and going out to a library/archive/family history fair, or even self-labelling as a family historian. In Gardiner's study (2004), only 63% of her genealogists (recruited at family history fairs) were using the Internet within their research. Gardiner and Frazier (2001) had similar proportions of new and experienced researchers, but of respondents who had been researching for over 10 years (46% and 45%). Participants in Drake's (2001) study had been engaged in family history research for an average of 14 years. Sinko and Peters (1983) noted that over half their respondents had begun their research since 1977, the year of broadcast of Alex Haley's *Roots*, which the authors believed had been a catalyst for beginning research.

Just over half (50.9%) of respondents were members of a genealogical or family history society, mirroring the proportions observed by Sinko and Peters (1983). As with the present research, they also found that their respondents used libraries "far more than the national average". This is particularly relevant for local studies collections and public libraries;

although all of these members may not currently be active library users, here we have a large potential library user group, of which nearly eighty percent are already receptive to what libraries have to say. These rates compare favourably to an approximately 58% membership rate in the general UK population (LISU 2006). As frequency of public library membership increases with research experience, and again reiterating that membership does not necessarily equate with use, this is an interesting statistic for libraries and local studies. In terms of assistance, beginners (where local studies could be more useful in instruction terms) are least likely to be near a library, whereas the value of libraries and local studies appears to demonstrate itself to researchers over time. With this study's aims of making UK local studies more visible (1.6), differences in provision overseas are an important consideration; knowledge of UK terminology and practices must not be assumed.

The fact that most respondents were researching in many UK areas (4.5) has further implications for libraries and local studies, in terms of the requirements for knowledge of more than one type of research. Substantial differences exist in electronic availability and informational content of, particularly civil registration records, between England and Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom, which researchers may not be familiar with (6.9). Local studies practitioner education must consider that they may be approached for assistance on the use of systems or records in another jurisdiction from the one in which they are resident and/or employed.

Self-ratings given by respondents of their computer and Internet competencies (4.6) will be highly subjective, and may not accurately reflect (in either direction) the true level of a respondent's skills. Ehrlinger (2008), in relation to over-confident predictions, suggests three sources of error in performance self-assessment: the lack of enough knowledge to judge performance level, the use of wrong information within an evaluation, and the influence of "pre-existing self views" or motivational factors. Dunning *et al.* (2003) note that those who are extremely knowledgeable or skilled can have the opposite problem, consistently rating their own performance or skill level unfavourably "relative to the people with whom they compare themselves". Is still a significant difference between the genders a real difference, or an under-estimation of skill level by women? Li and Kirkup (2007) noted that the literature

"consistently finds that women have less confidence in their ability to use computers, even when their computer performance was much better" than that of male colleagues.

Since more than half the responding user community reported having used electronic resources for over 3 years (4.7), on reflection it would have been meaningful to have attempted to measure resource use over a longer time period. Gardiner (2004) observed that "most had at least a few years experience. The most common time period for Internet use was 3-4 years however almost half the respondents had been using the Internet for their research for over 5 years", indicating that Internet resources have been in widespread use for longer than appreciated. Gardiner noted that amongst her sample, men were much more likely to be using the Internet within their family history research, and indeed more likely to be using the Internet in general. As previously discussed, Internet research company Nielsen//Netratings (2005) noted more men than women accessing sites in their genealogy category. This suggests men are interested in the hobby, but less willing to specifically label themselves as a family historian. With US respondents using e-resources for longer, it is likely that the rate of growth of genealogy has recently been higher in the UK than elsewhere, catching-up with interest in North America, although further investigation would be necessary to confirm influencing factors. Frazier (2001) also found highly significant connections between length of Internet experience and e-genealogical resource use.

Interestingly, the combined total of broadband users in the UK is 78.9%, significantly higher than anywhere else, consistent with figures from Nielsen//Netratings (2005) that 75% of all accesses to sites in their UK genealogy category were made using a broadband connection. It is interesting that given the earlier development and take up of the Internet in the USA, the UK is ahead with connection speeds. It is notable that at the time of the survey, there was still a significant group of researchers using dial-up Internet connections, for example around 36% of researchers in New Zealand. This has implications for resource design; sites with large images or other complex features may irritate users with broadband connections, but become practically unusable for those on dial-up. This can lead to users giving up on or avoiding a resource (Nielson 2010). The implications for libraries and local studies of so many respondents researching only from home are the limited opportunity for intervention, except in a remote manner. Therefore library and local studies information presented online

should be as clear and accessible as possible. Also of note is the relatively small percentage of those whose main research location is a library who base all their research there.

9.3   Users and Resources

Users' source preferences (5.4) confirmed and illustrated a high level of use of *Ancestry*, *ScotlandsPeople*, *FamilySearch*, and *Genes Reunited*. Nielsen//NetRatings (2005) similarly reported that the three most popular sites in their UK genealogy category were *Genes Reunited* (most unique visitors and biggest increase in visitors), *Rootsweb*, and *Ancestry*; users spent more time on *Ancestry* per visit (28:50 compared to 14:03, *Genes Reunited*). Skinner (2010) likewise observed that *Ancestry* and *FamilySearch* were the most-cited websites in her research with Iowa genealogists; Richards (2006) reported her participants' most commonly accessed sites were the *1901 Census, Ancestry and FamilySearch.* Why are these sites so popular and so heavily used? They are all large resources, with national (often international) coverage, both of which give more scope for potential users than a resource focusing on a smaller area. This therefore can be easier to market on a larger scale. They also all deal (largely) in what S5 called "hard facts"; the building blocks of the family tree, although some provide much more in terms of family history information. Skinner (2010) also found that "users tended to prefer websites geared towards genealogy". As mentioned previously (2.3), the branches of the family tree and genealogical facts seem to be where researchers repeatedly return to (Toms and Duff 2003). Francis (2004) agrees in her genealogical search process model, noting that researchers continually return to an earlier point in the cycle (6.2). In assessments of shadowees' "first instinct" resource preferences (5.4), participants were more inclined to turn to familiar resources for known items, and search (with *Google* being the only search engine used) for information that was not known/unknown, supporting the findings of Rieh (2003). In terms of local studies, what this also demonstrates is that in the first instincts of participants there is no sign of local studies sites (7.1, 8.2). It is also clear that many researchers were unaware of records and research procedures in other countries of the UK (4.5, 6.9).

With regard to users' source selection (5.5), Richards (2006) also found researchers selected sources by the cost and reliability of the information. She also noted that "reliability and accuracy are not always the most important" if the information could also be verified

elsewhere. Speed of access was considered less important than usability. Gardiner (2004)'s researchers felt the authority of the source is most important in source selection. Frazier (2001)'s participants had noticed an increase in "poorly researched information" appearing online. Ownership of a resource is another factor, with FG1 trusting "sites operated by government, territorial authorities, universities and [family history societies]" more than commercial entities. Gardiner (2004)'s interviewees similarly agreed that if an organisation had invested in record transcription, it was fair to ask for "payment for access", although two-thirds felt the Internet had commercialised genealogy, partly exploiting "beginners or those who do not yet know better". Almost half of Garrett's (2010) respondents "stated they take issue with having to pay to view public records online... [although] the convenience of having access to so many records outweighs their desire to have free access". Richards (2006) also found subscriptions were preferred to pay-as-you-go as a method of payment. Family historians' evaluation of information at the micro-level demonstrates great research sophistication, and high levels of information literacy. This is reflected in the genealogical literature (Shown Mills 1997a and others), and in the evaluative criteria (5.3). Duff, Craig and Cherry (2004) found researchers were keen to "ensure confidence in the digital copy", and authenticity of production.

Gardiner (2004) similarly found search engines the most popular means of discovering Internet information (5.5). Mandl (2007) noted this may be the case because links tend to send user to a homepage, or page high in a website's hierarchy; these are likely to remain the same over time, and are less likely to be reorganised, but also less likely to bring a user to exactly what they are after, as FF3 asserted. The strategies used to enhance search results (excluding appropriate words, qualifying a search, using alternative wording) echoes behaviour exhibited by searchers with both web and domain knowledge (Jenkins, Corritore and Wiedenbeck 2003). Points raised by participants with regard to interactions with others (5.8.4) do tend to perpetuate the stereotype of the time-heavy "where's the book on my family" researcher alluded to in the library literature (Howells 2001; Veale 2004a and others; 7.4). 'Novice' researchers, with a lack of etiquette and conception of the research process clearly still infuriate more experienced researchers, as with Gardiner's interviewees. Yakel (2004) discusses "two core ethical precepts of genealogists and family historians, information sharing and giving back" (also Fulton 2009b). This was demonstrated in the present study;

several researchers discussed their enjoyment of giving something back to the research community, in assisting and researching for others (5.8.1) and transcribing for *FreeBMD* (5.9).

9.4   *User Research Behaviour*

Richards (2006), Lambert (1996) and many others have identified constructing the family tree as a major, if not the greatest, motivation for research. It is also the first step in any research (Yakel 2004 and others). Umfleet (2009) also observed that listening to family stories, or receiving research from a relative initially sparked an interest in genealogy; discovering or viewing family photographs or heirlooms also triggered research. With regard to the frequency of research, Butterworth (2006) confirmed the present findings that researchers had "unpredictable periods of research inactivity"; similarly Fulton (2009a) noted research often takes place on a sporadic or seasonal basis. Veale (2004b) observed that posting of messages in genealogical news groups could increase by up to 50% in the winter months, particularly around the Christmas period. All but 2 diarists researched at home; Gill (2007) noted this could be concerning for local studies, given the high relevance of their materials. Duration of diary sessions also varied widely, from 2 minutes (D08) to a mammoth 710 minutes, nearly 12 hours (D19). Participants in Fulton (2006) devoted a great deal of time to their information-seeking, commonly two to ten hours per week, but also up to thirty. Rieh (2003) observed those searching in the home environment did so "in shorter intervals and less intensely", not overly concerned with completing in one sitting. Sessions took place at all times of the day and night, although mostly in the evening or late afternoon. Fulton (2006) observed that research took place "sometimes in the middle of the night, with one participant commenting that she had 'to discipline myself to do my housework'". It is notable that e-resources have allowed researchers the flexibility to spend as much time as they have on their research, at their convenience, not restricted by the opening hours of repositories. Some American libraries do sometimes host evening or overnight "lock-ins" (Malone 2010; RUSA 2009); these are so far rare in the UK (where any occurrences have not been well publicised), and may be something local studies could offer in the future.

Gill (2007) discovered her respondents collected more than basic tree information, with a distinction appearing "between researching back chronologically through the generations,

and including siblings and other ancestors not in the direct line". However, in the vast majority of both cases, this was a precursor to discovering a wider family history, discovering, amongst other things: "where they lived, what the land looked like, what jobs they had, political situations" (S2). Yakel and Torres (2007) report "while [names and dates are] essential to complete the pedigree chart and research family lines, genealogists need to fill-in the story between or within those lines". This "always somebody else" factor in FF2's case further demonstrates the perpetual nature of research, illustrating the circular sense of the information-seeking model of Francis (2004), where researchers return to an earlier stage with each new branch or generation. Further, as reflected by Francis' circular pattern, researchers are looking for different things at different times. The stages of research identified by Duff and Johnson (2003) (names, dates and relationships; further detailed information; societal context) were non-linear and changed throughout research. This also reflects Bates (1989)'s Berrypicking; where new information and new ancestors leads to many new directions, and searches, sources, search terms and strategies change and depend "on the particular need" at that particular moment. Bishop (2003) also noted "information was constantly evaluated to determine how it will be incorporated into past research". Williams (1996) found "while many searchers do seem well satisfied with some names written on a genealogical chart, others, once they have named great-grandfather, must locate his house. They find themselves deeply curious about his neighbours. For these people, a study of local history has been entered on, almost without a conscious decision". Duff (2002) and Duff and Johnson (2003) both identified names (in particular), places, and dates as common search terms; Duff recommended these fields for inclusion in information systems potentially used as sources of genealogical information. Although a researcher may set out looking for a genealogical fact concerning a specific person, this can often open out into a family history enquiry very quickly after the fact is uncovered, widening and encompassing other information needs.

Following and considering this discussion above; the earlier defined genealogical fact (Figure 1.1), and the aspects of family historian research behaviour detailed in Table 6.3, the following model of Family Historians' online research behaviour has been developed. This reflects the actions, strategies, and outcomes within participant's behaviour previously explored (6.4-6.7); as with these aforementioned categories, the model focuses on online behaviour in general, and is not limited to specific resources.
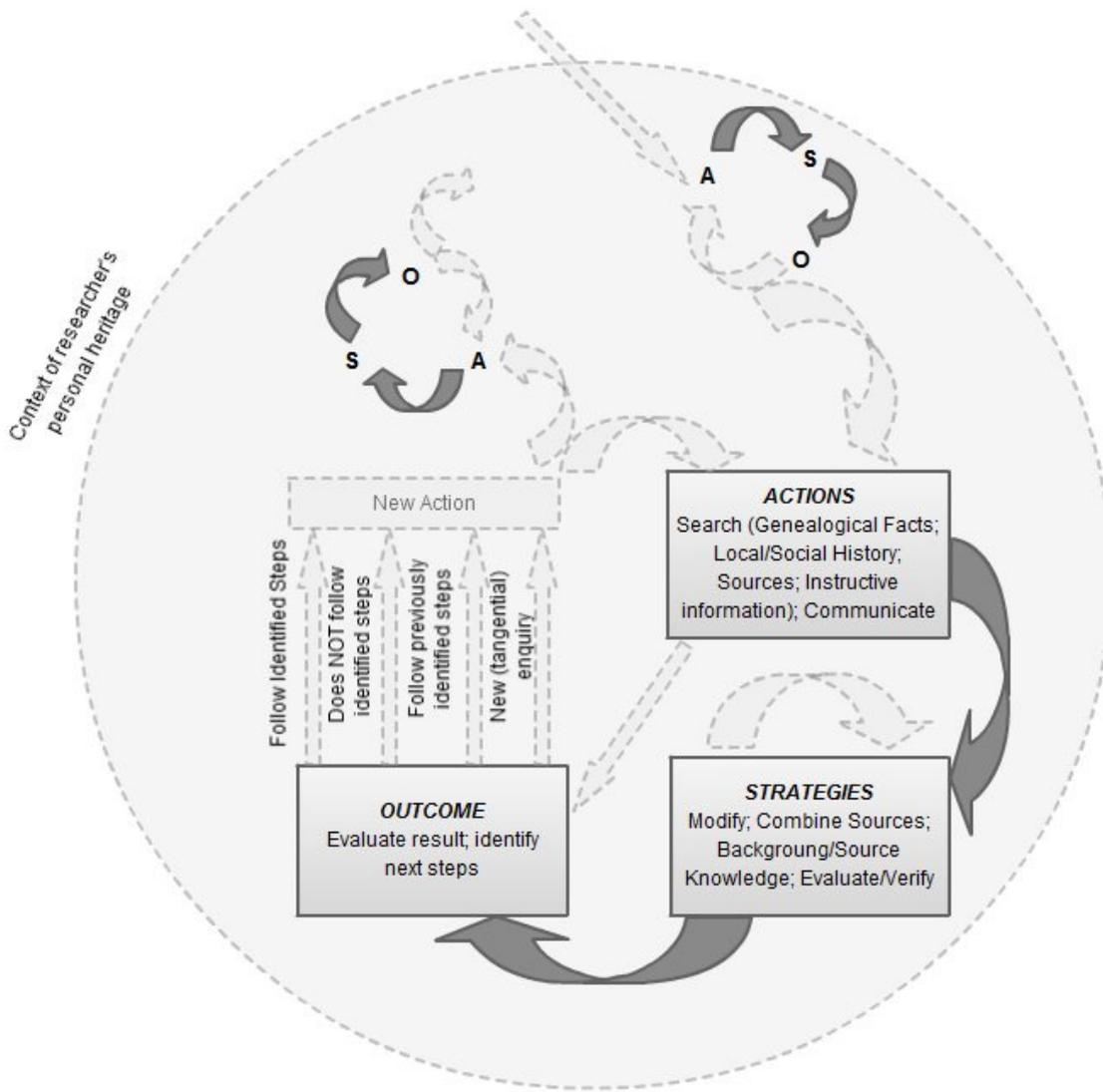
Figure 9.1: Model of Family Historian Online Reseach Behaviour

The behaviour takes place within the overall context of a researcher's own personal heritage, which, as has been reflected in the literature, will change as the research progresses (Bates 1999). The shape draws (in particular) from: Duff and Johnson (2003)'s description of research as iterative; Yakel (2004) notion of a continuous, ongoing process; and Francis (2004)'s concept of a circular research pattern (although that is not quite the case here), with researchers constantly returning to an earlier stage. It is not a process with a definable beginning and end, but continuous; it has a circular element, but each cycle comes back to begin a new action. It resembles most closely the winding of string or thread round a pencil: circular but yet on-going; repeating, but at the same time building on past work. With that in

mind, the model enlarges and details one 'cycle' of research behaviour, but alludes to the further cycles that take place before and after this. Both solid (definite) and dotted (possible) arrows represent the different paths a researcher takes.

As with Table 6.3, Actions (6.5) are largely based around searching for Genealogical Facts, and reframing requests for information (although they also encompass communication with other researchers, resources and repositories). As explored by Duff and Johnson (2003), a researcher "must reframe his or her request for information about people to a request for information about record forms and creators...system-related material that just happens to have people's names in it". Researchers are "thinking like a genealogist" in uncovering sources (Duff and Johnson 2003). Aube and Ettori (2005) found two-thirds of their French genealogists used the Internet to learn about research methods and sources. This is an avenue already exploited by many local studies services on their websites (7.3), but could be further developed, and promoted more specifically (10.6). Yakel (2004) and Bishop (2003) both noted the use of computer software for personal information management, although at that stage Bishop's researchers did not entirely trust it with their data. Researching for others is interesting, not so much in itself, but insofar as even though researchers are not hunting for their own family, they still, as demonstrated in this research, harbour a comparable level of enthusiasm. With some writers saying that it is the personal connection to ancestors that drives positive affect in family history (6.8), this suggests otherwise, as does Cooper (2005). "A genealogist may take months or years to find the information they are seeking (or they may never find it), therefore, their satisfaction must come from the act of research itself", This further indicates that researchers take as pleasure in the *process* of their hobby as they do from the *outcome* of the resultant family tree or history (6.1, 6.9).

Duff and Johnson (2003) describe research as iterative, and observed that participants employed a number of strategies (6.6) in their searching, which they had no hesitation in changing when required. Strategies could be also repeated for new searches. Hölscher and Strube (2000) similarly note that users searching with both web and domain knowledge were "able to be flexible in their strategies". Mansourian (2006) described search coping strategies as both passive and active (those identified in the present research are predominantly active). He suggested the level of importance (or interest level) of the search to a user impacts on the

level of effort involved, and the number of coping strategies employed in order to ensure success. Much enthusiasm and commitment has been noted in the literature (1.1, 2.3, 3.7.2, 6.1); this commitment may make be the difference between success and failure for researchers. The dotted arrow here represents the fact that the 'Strategies' element has a circular system of its own: many different strategies can be tried, retried, or altered before an outcome is decided upon by a researcher for a particular action.

With regard to combinations with offline research, Skinner (2010) observed "users value both face-to-face interaction and working with original documents, while also valuing the convenience of Internet-based resources...users conducted research both within institutions and on the Internet, suggesting...both types of resources offer different types of materials or experiences". Duff, Craig and Cherry (2004) discovered that historians had an "unexpected intellectual thrill or mystical experience" when interacting with original historical sources. The use and recall of source knowledge was one strategy that demonstrates the sophisticated knowledge and understanding of most researchers (1.1, 6.6, 6.9). This source awareness informs search modifications, or tactics researchers can employ to improve retrieval of information; showing awareness of the age and place name irregularities that can exist in the original sources, which have therefore transferred to online versions (Reid 2003).

In the event that no strategies are employed, a further dotted arrow does exist linking between actions and outcomes, effectively bypassing strategies. However, certainly as one's knowledge of family history and personal heritage is established and grows, it is almost certain that this knowledge will impact on a search strategy, either consciously or subconsciously. As stated before, Outcomes (6.7) are the least concrete, or externally visible, of the categories. Within this stage of model, the actor evaluates the outcome of their search/communication is; whether the information has been found, partially found, not found, or whether different information has been encountered or found on a serendipitous basis. Foster and Ford (2003) said that serendipity could relate both to information encountered both by chance, or new information with unexpectedly high value. The chances of serendipity occurring could be increased with various strategies, e.g. shelf-browsing, and could also be realised more effectively with "certain attitudes and strategic decisions". Kuglin (2004) noted that shelf-browsing was very important for her participants at all stages

of research, and preferable to locating material via OPACs. This highlights the importance of browsing functions in information systems (Duff 2002; Duff and Johnston 2003). Following their own evaluation of the particular action, the actor/researcher will decide on the next step in their research. Again, this process is not very observable; only known to the researcher unless it is divulged to another. When the researcher next returns to their research, four possible 'outcomes' or directions are possible, as represented by the 4 dotted arrows in the model: the identified next steps can be followed, NOT followed, previously identified steps (researcher is jumping around between enquiries), or a new (or indeed tangential) enquiry can be entered upon. The selected direction/outcome subsequently feeds into a new action, and a new cycle of the main system of the model.

This area of the research has drawn broadly on the work of several authors (2.2, 2.3), for example the user focus of Dervin (1992), and the genealogy focus of Francis (2004), itself an extension of Kuhlthau's (1991) Information Seeking Process into that more specific context. The present model differs from these in so far as the model represents an ongoing process, to which beginning and end points cannot be identified or defined, and likewise the search does not have a tangible end product in itself. (Researchers may choose to write up a family history or tree representing the culmination of all or a section of their research at a particular time, but their search would still continue after this point.) It is similar to Savolainen's (1995) Everyday Life Information Seeking in this regard, taking place within the context of a researchers' personal heritage rather than way and mastery of life, and carried out with the commitment of a serious leisure pursuit (Stebbins 2009). As discussed above, the shape is particularly influenced by Francis; Duff and Johnson (2003)'s description of research as iterative, and Yakel's (2004) notion of an ongoing process. Similarly, it also takes Bates' (1989) Berrypicking model of a constantly evolving query (although with a finishing point) forward into a continuous process, or "very long, complicated, unending reference question" (Phelps 2003a).

As with the affective elements observed in 6.8, Yakel (2004) describes family history researcher needs as both informational and affective, searching for meaning amongst records. Yakel and Torres (2007) observed that researchers invested substantial emotion and personal involvement in information-seeking and the results of their research; Gill (2007)

likewise identified that they "spoke about their successes and failures in strongly emotional terms. Her participants found their family history course highly motivating, and an excellent social network. Fulton further emphasises the central role positive affect takes in genealogical information-seeking (2009a), and suggests that the "thrill of the chase" is heightened by the speed of Internet information retrieval. The social "community" is also important for researchers, with interactions with other researchers playing a "positive role" in the experience; whether for information exchange, as distant relatives, or just as "like-minded" researchers. Stebbins has identified personal affective benefits as an important component of a Serious Leisure pursuit. Umfleet (2009) observed that the positive feelings induced by research increased self-esteem, and positive support from friends and family induced positive feelings in researchers. Fulton (2009b) also suggests the co-operation and sharing of information amongst other researchers can induce positive feelings.

As previously discussed (3.4), Patsy Kensit (BBC News 2008) almost aborted filming *WDYTYA?* following a discovery of criminality in her family; D03 also stopped investigating a line of enquiry when an unwelcome revelation was made. Kramer (2010) found nearly 15% of her researchers reported encountering hostility and conflict during the course of their research, including when encountering "unwelcome" information. Although Kuhlthau (1991) suggests affect moved from uncertainty to satisfaction throughout an information-seeking exercise, Francis (2004) noted that this can differ for genealogists where they may never find a particular piece of information, perhaps never experiencing the positive feelings of completion. Perseverance is one of the indicators of serious leisure activity (Stebbins 2009). Owing to their high level of commitment to the search (Williams 1996, Mansourian 2006), researchers do have the ability to change or alter strategies (6.6; Figure 9.1; Duff and Johnson 2003) when a tactic is not working or appears to be producing the "wrong" results (as Williams (1996) observes: "a personal connection drives us on").

With regard to observed high levels of information literacy (6.9), Butterworth (2006) unexpectedly discovered "users tended to have very good, well defined research questions, whereas we had expected them to have only vague, badly expressed ideas about their research"; later surmising this was down to a great deal of experience with sources and research. Skov (2009) agreed researchers' information needs were surprisingly well-defined.

Gill (2007) also observed although many of her participants had no formal qualifications and were largely elderly, through family history classes they gained ICT proficiencies, and high levels of information literacy and critical evaluation. Effort in acquiring skill is a further demonstration of Stebbins (2009)'s Serious Leisure. Reid and Macafee (2007) have stated that a high and sophisticated level of information literacy was needed for successful local studies investigations, which has been much affirmed by the present study. Duff and Johnson (2002) identified historians both accumulating contextual knowledge; and identifying relevant material in archives: "vital connection between context and identifying relevance"; and this often occurred simultaneously and in a non-linear fashion. They also often look for events that were likely to have occurred in an ancestor's life. As above, this is an example of "system information that just happens to have peoples' name in it" (Duff and Johnson 2003). With regard to less information literate traits, findings by Jenkins, Corritore and Wiedenbeck (2003) suggest that, without web skills, users were liable to get distracted and have problems locating information; this was not compensated for by domain knowledge. In other words, even an experienced genealogist may flounder without web expertise.

The relationships visible between researcher and their ancestors highlight (even possibly strengthen) the personal connection that drives family historians forward with their research, possibly even more so when a piece of information is proving difficult to locate (6.1, 6.8). Researchers' keenness to tell stories (Cooper 2005) is also widely reflected in library literature (2.5). Both Yakel (2004) and Fulton (2009b) note the importance of information exchange to and interactions many researchers; Stebbins (2009) also highlights the importance of social benefits in Serious Leisure activities. A competitive element can easily develop here; this could be associated with the hunting/detective terminology that researchers use, and where it could turn into a race. Again, this links to the information sharing norms of Fulton (2009b); information is unlikely to continue to be shared unless the sharing is reciprocated.

In their investigation of genealogists' behaviour in archives, Duff and Johnson (2003) were concerned that their results was "more representative of expert researchers than novice genealogists". Yakel (2004) also had concerns that when she interviewed genealogists in her study, she was seeing the behaviour of established researchers, rather than beginners. This issue was considered in the present research (3.7.2), but by the time subjects reached this

stage they had already gathered more experience, at the very least in the length of time they had pursued their hobby. Although this may raise slight reservations in terms of results, research of this nature will always be far more likely to recruit more experienced researchers, and it is from identifying the strategies of established family historians that we can perhaps learn most. These strategies are one of the most important implications of the model of Family Historians' Online Research Behaviour (Figure 9.1) for local studies practitioners. Awareness of different repeating strategies to apply will broaden the understanding, and drawing in background knowledge of resources will give guidance as to which particular strategies may be more appropriate in any situation. Further, the definition of Genealogical Fact (Figure 1.2) gives researchers and practitioners assisting them a specific fact to aim for; a slightly more concrete conception of what they are seeking. Also important to realise is that not finding an answer to a query on one occasion does not preclude progress in another direction, or returning to that query at another time. Using this to assist novice family historians to bridge the gap (Duff and Johnson 2003, Francis 2004), is where this knowledge of research behaviour could be most helpful to local studies professionals. Gardiner (2004) also notes her researchers displayed largely good information skills, but would benefit from learning to increase search efficiency. Many sources were highly visible, which does not appear to be the case for e-local studies. Gill (2007) noted "the elation they feel when a search is successful, and the frustration of not being able to find an ancestor no matter how hard they tried".

What is also important to consider is the possible effect of the shape of e-resources (5.3) on the online information behaviour of family historians. The model above has described the shape of their behaviour, but it is extremely likely that e-resources' their nature, content and structure help create this shape by pushing and pulling their behaviour in a particular way. Certainly researcher awareness of content contributes to their background knowledge of resources, and which particular repeating strategies may be most appropriate in a given situation. This is an important issue to take forward for further investigation (10.6).

9.5   *Local Studies*

The structure and terminology of local studies services were, as expected, very mixed (7.2), reflecting the diversity of service structures and titles found in literature (Dewe 2002b, Parton 2003, Mawe 2007). Although joint services unify information provision, the collating and merging of departments may not be ideal in all circumstances, as differing outlooks and personalities may affect the storage, treatment, access to (Dewe 2002b), as well as the identity of the information and service itself (7.3). Where this is the best solution locally, joint services are to be welcomed; however, where changes are brought about by local government reorganisation (1.3) or internal authority restructuring, often the best interests of all services are not considered. Mawe noted that users "visiting different library authorities may also be confused about which service area local studies" could be found.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to pin down specific roles for local studies, given the number of different functions and responsibilities local studies can connect with, including lifelong learning, lending, reference, community information, and both formal and informal education. Barber (2002b) famously described local studies as a "Cinderella service", where no-one was quite aware of its precise remit. As LS1 described, "local studies has a bit of an identity problem" within their larger departments, LAs, and with some members of the public (Barber 2002a) where within a joint service; conversely, its identity can re-emerge from a service restructure (LS10, Barber 2007). McMenemy (2007), in his examination of Scottish library websites, observed a clearer library identity and better presented service when websites were removed from LA structure and "control". Whilst there are distinct advantages to maintaining your own site, for example gaining control over design, layout and navigation, you do lose the expertise of the authority IT departments, experience which is often not present in the skill set of local studies and other heritage practitioners (7.8).

As White (2002a) has noted, the community memory contained within the local studies collection logically extends to websites as they become parts of local studies provision. It is clear is that local studies seem to be 'up for the challenge' of providing an enthusiastic and worthwhile service to family historians, and despite fears (Billeter 2001, Webster 2005 and others) that practitioners may be unprepared, there did not seem to be any feeling of hesitation in assisting in any way possible (LS2). LS4 highlighted the important point that

local and remote users are not mutually exclusive (7.3); Reid 2003; Reid and Macafee 2007). LS9 noted that although their service was "council-run, it is in the fortunate position of maintaining its own web site... [and] complete control (within the technical constraints) over what is added and how it is displayed". Houghton (2005) and McMenemy (2007) both note that libraries often feel restricted within an authority website. Navigation was the most variable element here; but also one of the most important for users (8.4). It may also be most subjective from user to user. Mawe (2007) also found problems, owing to "confusing placement of hyperlinks to related internal pages". Barry and Tedd (2008) in contrast found nearly 90% or sites were easy to navigate. There were two cases where frames were in use, which are rarely successful (Neilson 1999). Breadcrumb trails were a popular feature with users (8.4). Although Mawe reported that navigation "did not present any major problems", as the majority (62%) [of her sample] provided more than three different navigation aids", it is important to note that the presence of navigational aids *does not* necessarily provide good navigation (8.4). She similarly found "all but one provided a search facility". The elements concerned are those over which many practitioners will have no control. Scrolling, although inevitable to some extent, is an area which could be improved; Mawe also observed 50% of her sample required users to "scroll through more than two screens", and more concerning, "over a quarter of the sample (29%) exhibited problems that may hinder readability", such as text-size, white space and text length. Findings in the present study indicate that it is likely not to have been to a completely destructive extent. Barry and Tedd found that Irish sites were, on the whole, consistently designed and easy to read, but less than half used images.

Mawe (2007) also found 35% of collections referred users to the main library service pages for contact information; in all cases varying levels of detail were exhibited. Six of her sample offered no online means of contacting the service, which was "particularly unsatisfactory" for remote users. Online forms are an option worth considering here; they encourage enquirers to specify more information about their request (Duff and Johnson 2002; Reid 2003). Mawe's sample fared better in terms of Collection Description, with 52% providing detailed descriptions of resources. Comparing this with what practitioners consider above to be the main purpose of local studies service websites, advertising services and describing collections, websites here could do *far more*. Improving descriptions of resources is an action that could be taken at relatively little cost in comparison to the benefit it would bring. It does

require the investment of staff time, but the return could be time saved with fewer enquiries about collection contents (Reid 2003; Andrews 2006 and others). Also, many services made no provision whatsoever of Additional Guidance materials, even for physical materials in the collection. Even if these are PDFs of existing hard-copy leaflets, this is better than nothing; especially since acting as a guide and interpreter of the collections and other information is a major element of service provision for researchers (7.2). Mawe also observed "a significant 42% of the sample did not provide any guidance on how to use resources, or specific topics". Description of the collection is an important element of what users look for from LSHPs (8.7), and if considered a principal role of the website, should perhaps be prioritised for further development.

Mawe (2007) discovered 3 sites "only provided access to information about local studies services from outside of the library pages". She found one "particularly confusing" where links labels were sometimes misleading. "However, the difficulty in locating this page and the number of 'clicks' required may suggest that some users might not persevere that long". This serious issue also arose within the focus groups, where participants often persisted longer searching for local studies information than they otherwise would have done (8.3). She further states that presenting "potential barriers" to the location of LSHPs is "a priority area of concern, because if a user cannot find the site, it doesn't matter whether or not it provides adequate content or usability". Similarly LS10 also asserted the importance of their site as "a promotional/informative tool, describing our resources but until accessibility is improved its usefulness is limited". As discussed briefly above, this is a critical issue. Local studies must remove as many access barriers as possible if sites are to attract users. Barry and Tedd (2008)'s interviewees were all agreed about the importance of having a website for the collection, for access, user education, but also for disseminating information to patrons in the digital age. Mawe notes that although multiple links can aid discovery of the LHSP, it "can be confusing or frustrating when differently labelled links" lead to the same destination. Although discovering vastly more content than was initially apparent was pleasantly surprising, information provision appears messy when no obvious route exists between providers. Several cases featured an LSHP within the main library/archive/museum service, with other substantial local history content elsewhere and *unlinked* in the service structure. Shadowee S6 shared such frustrations regarding Aberdeen City Council's website, where the

LSHP was previously buried deep within the library structure. She happily noted that this had been rectified, and local studies now linked clearly and directly from the library home page. Even where local studies are no longer part of libraries in LA structure terms, *it is strongly advised that the LSHP should still be linked from libraries*. The concept of local studies has a strong association with libraries in the minds of many people and throughout the literature. In the interests of promoting local history material provided elsewhere on an LA site, it should all be connected with direct routes from local studies wherever possible.

MLA (2006) noted low levels of compliance from library, archive and museum sites overall, with regard to certain priority 1 elements, for example providing "a text equivalent for every non-text element" (W3C 1999). They found that only half their sample provided this for "all images and graphics...40% of the sample included some 'non-text elements' without alternatives". A report for the UK Cabinet Office's former e-government unit similarly observed that 97% of 436 government sites across Europe failed to meet priority 1 elements (BBC News 2005). Mawe (2007) observed this area required much "greater attention". Lottery–funded sites are required to meet these high standards before they are signed off by the funders (Masson 2004). Reid (2003) notes that local studies site can be hard to keep updated as few details may change, but that equally a site needs to show some level of recent activity, as a lack of this suggests that the information is not particularly cared for. Every site should be constantly under review, monitoring "what works and what doesn't". Mawe found only 29% gave any date of last update, particularly surprising given the importance attached to this in the information profession (5.2). The difficulties and time consumption of link maintenance is well documented; Mawe found no broken links on 71% of sites, and "five or less" within the rest of her sample.

It is important, as Reid and Macafee (2007) assert, for local studies to "create a resource, not a brochure" on their websites. Although internally-hosted online content was most common, often this was not to the same depth of that seen externally. We must bear in mind in the vast majority of cases, external sites had received additional funding, whether from a lottery source or elsewhere (Dewe 2002b, Mawe 2007, and others), making much more content possible. Mawe found no access to digital material or "narrative information about their locality" in over half her sample, "while 16% contained at least a sample of material on the

local studies library web pages"; 29% had produced external sites, comparable figures to this research. She observed that digitised images were most common, and agreed that "more interactive" features mostly occur "on the external websites produced in association with the local studies collections". Photo websites were extremely prevalent: Reid (2003) noted that photograph and images were resources particularly suited to the online medium. Disappointingly, it was common for content to be linked only from the library pages, and not necessarily local studies. If material has been digitised and/or contributed elsewhere, services must 'shout about it' and promote it at every opportunity. Further, what was surprising was that neither local studies nor the library service linked or promoted *Routes to Your Routes* (Fig. 7.12; 7.5); this excellent resource was discovered *only* via a press release. Resources must be promoted and visible if researchers are going to discover and use them. As Gregg (2002) observes: "It is of little use developing the most engaging and enlightening collection if no one even suspects that it might hold something worthwhile...Part of the recent surge in the popularity of local history collections is due in no small measure to the availability of effective electronic databases for history, heritage and genealogical searching...which are now far more user friendly". These are our most innovative e-LS materials; they **MUST** be promoted and be made as discoverable and accessible as possible.

Again, it is important for Local Studies to emphasise the availability of subscriptions to such an important Family History research tool as *Ancestry*. There were three instances where the existence of an *Ancestry* subscription was not highlighted on the local studies pages; instead the information was hidden within Links or lists of electronic resources, and in one case it was announced *only* in a press release. Similarly, Mawe (2007) noted that "many public libraries subscribe to databases that may benefit local studies users, but only 29% of the sample supply links to this service. In the absence of this, many users could remain oblivious to the existence of these resources". Patrons cannot make use of such valuable resources if they are not aware of their availability. With regard to other commercial databases, Torbay Libraries highlighted a consortium purchasing scheme between "142 public library authorities in England have that joined together for the first time to share the cost of a 2-year national licence for a range of OUP[283] online resources" (Torbay Council 2008). Initially in a pilot phase at the time of data collection, the MLA's Reference Online framework agreement

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[283] Oxford University Press.

has now been extended (Woodhouse 2009, MLA 2011), allowing LAs to subscribe to a greater range of online resources on nationally-negotiated terms, achieving significant savings. The availability of OUP resources in the pilot would partly account for their high incidence here, aside from their broad reference applicability across a wide range of subjects. Woodhouse noted that separate usage statistics were not uniformly available from either database publishers or subscribing authorities (which was to be addressed), although overall use had increased as a result of the scheme. However, "four of the 17 suppliers responding provided separate figures for remote and in-library usage. Where remote and in-library user sessions could be distinguished, remote use was 30% greater than that in the library". The ability to access these information products remotely is an issue important to users (8.5), particularly if more resources are now uniformly available across significant areas of the country. LS8 observed "a noticeable increase in [computer] usage" since their subscription to *Ancestry Library*. It is important for services to document this database use with statistics where possible. Other website figures are useful to identify popular sections of a site (Reid and Macafee 2007), and could inform further redesigns, content development, or marketing strategies.

Links sections could be provided or enhanced at a relatively small cost; a comprehensive collection of links should be considered a core part of e-local studies provision. Mawe (2007) found that 38% of her sample simply listed links without commentary, and 10% added brief annotations. "A fifth of the sample (21%) provided dedicated subject gateways...however almost a third (31%) of the websites sampled did not provide any links to external websites...links to websites providing local information and records as the most popular category". She included only those provided by local studies, which may explain differences from the present research (Fig. 7.16; 7.5). Another service provided "Websites of Local Interest" as a PDF file; although links can now be followed from inside a PDF file, this practice is not user-friendly and should be avoided, unless provided in addition to an HTML website. Where links/database are not provided by the local studies service, there should be a clear link clear through to it.

Although they are electronic and largely online, OPACs are a 'finding' device, and mostly do not give access to digital materials; there will still be issue in actually accessing physical

materials remotely. Despite this, it is an element users considered should be present without question (8.7). Black (2007a) asserted the importance "for the future well-being of both virtual and traditional that library services establish and maintain a presence on the home page of their authority's website", noting the two access points to online library services (library home page and library catalogue), and that links to these rarely appear together. He compiled a listing (2007b), finding that "only 22[284] out of 203 LAs have direct links from their home pages to both the library service home page and to the library catalogue whilst around 55 have neither type of link" (2007a). This lack of interconnectivity between LA departments and sections could be easily solved.

As Reid (2003) notes, "Family history discussion threads have emerged as one of the most beneficial tools of e-genealogy for they enable researchers working on the same name or in the same geographic vicinity to come together, exchange information and post questions or queries". Of course allowing outside contributors can introduce a problem of information quality where Local Studies have no control, and Reid suggests placing a disclaimer (possibly a pop-up window) on portals and links to that effect. This may also highlight the issue to those users who had not considered it before. Watts (2006) similarly noted that service collaborations with relevant external agencies (e.g. Friends organisations, local and family history societies) were not overly prominent in her study.

Although many 'traditional' methods were employed by collections, few electronic means were mentioned for promotion. Services may take link traffic for granted as a promotional mechanism; however SEO is something more services should be aware of. It is likely that usually practitioners will have no direct control in this area; however, given that a significant proportion of traffic is likely to enter via a search engine (5.5, 5.7, 8.4), they should be aware of how their service appears in the rankings of major search engines, and of the concept of SEO, so they are in a stronger position to lobby their IT team for improvements where required. Events listings and descriptions were popular, and more prevalent in the present study than in Mawe's (2007) sample (25%). Some events were described as "various" with little specific information given. Such events offer opportunities for press coverage, for

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[284] "Incidentally the successful authorities are Buckinghamshire, Bury, Derbyshire, Dorset, East Lothian, Enfield, Gwynedd, Hampshire, Kent, Leicestershire, Merthyr Tydfil, Merton, Middlesbrough, Norfolk, North Ayrshire, Oxfordshire, Powys, Richmond , South Gloucestershire, Tameside, Westminster and York." (Black 2007a)

example, coverage of a *Family history day at Exmouth Library* (Exmouth Journal 2010), gave details of the event, and of the resources and services available to potential users. Importantly the *Ancestry* subscription is also highlighted. Melrose (2005) mentions the importance of nurturing contacts with the press, not just around the time of events. Local studies could make more use of these, and other online promotional methods, with little resource requirement apart from staff time.

Search engine visibility is an important factor in promotion of Local Studies services. Given that a significant proportion of research participants both used and navigated using *Google* (or other search engines) (5.5, 5.7), it is ***vital*** that LSHPs can be discovered by them. Focus group participant FB2 was interested in how local studies would fare in a *Google* search (8.4). Although there is a largely high incidence of appearance, ***all*** authorities should be present if *Google* is a significant, if not main, entry point to LSHPs. The lower incidence of the term genealogy is less encouraging, as this is frequently used by American researchers. The significant drop-off of family history, and in particular genealogy in the top 10 *Google* results is concerning, as the method reported by users as their main access point to local studies is not providing reliable access to LSHPs. This may be related to differing service names (7.2) and differing terminology; however, a remote user, whether in the UK or overseas, will not necessarily know the correct terms for an area. These findings, along with the fact that only two interviewees discussed search engine optimisation in any way, suggest that access could be improved by provision of training to staff in this area. Dawson and Hamilton (2006) note how "simple adjustments" to web pages and their metadata ("title tags in particular") can increase discovery of content. *Google Guide* (Blachman n.d.) offers similar insights into the workings of the search engine and how to encourage discovery. Those services whose titles featured highly in the 'Old Counties' search must have made reference to their associated names within their page metadata or content (Blachman n.d.). If resources such as *GENUKI* and the new *ScotlandsPlaces*[285] are organised by historic county, local studies could greatly improve their Google rankings by adding associated historical place names as metadata or within page text. Services need to anticipate location search terms (5.7, 6.5; Duff and Johnson 2003) that may be associated with their location. This also illustrates the important purpose of gazetteers within genealogical research (Duff and Johnson 2003).

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[285] ScotlandsPlaces, 2012. *ScotlandsPlaces* [http://www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/] Available at: [Accessed 24 February 2011]

Adopting Web 2.0 features forges "closer links with and between users" (Mawe 2007), increasing "engagement with the collections, and social learning" (Andrews 2006). Barry and Tedd (2008) also noted some uptake of Web 2.0 applications, for developing active relationships with users. Most commonly encountered during benchmarking was the facility to clip or bookmark pages using a number of social applications such as *Delicious*[286], *Digg*[287], *Facebook*[288], and *StumbleUpon*[289]. An RSS feed is useful, particularly for events of interest, because the provider does not have to rely on users revisiting a site and discovering such time-sensitive information; ***information is pushed out to them***. Since the benchmarking exercise took place, there has been an increase in the uptake of social networking by some collections; such as Highland's *Am Baile* on *Facebook* (Figure 7.22).
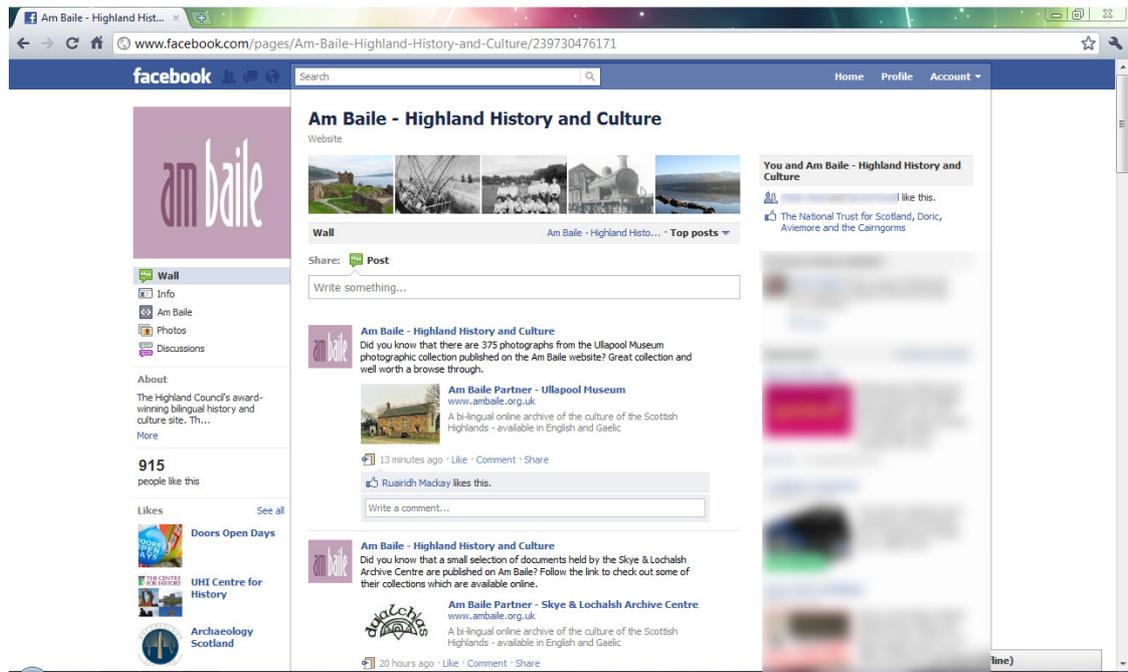
Figure 9.2: Am Baile Facebook[290]

Am Baile also operates a *Twitter* account, and both accounts can be updated simultaneously using applications or software such as *Tweetdeck*[291] or *Hootsuite*[292] (Van Grove 2009). Other

[286] AVOS, 2011. *Delicious* [online] Available at: http://www.delicious.com/ [Accessed 7 August 2011]

[287] Digg Inc., 2011. *Digg* [online] Available at: http://www.digg.com [Accessed 7 August 2011]

[288] Facebook, 2011a. *Facebook.com* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com [Accessed 7 August 2011]

[289] StumbleUpon, 2011. *StumbleUpon* [online] Available at: http://www.stumbleupon.com/ [Accessed 7 August 2011]

[290] Facebook, 2011e. *Am Baile - Highland History and Culture* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Am-Baile-Highland-History-and-Culture/239730476171 [Accessed 29 June 2011]

[291] Twitter, 2011. *Tweetdeck* [online] Available at: http://www.tweetdeck.com/ [Accessed 29 June 2011]

[292] HootSuite Media, 2011. *Hootsuite* [online] Available at: http://hootsuite.com/ [Accessed 13 May 2011]

authorities utilising *Facebook* in this way include *Swindon Local Studies and Family History Collection*[293]; *Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Archives*[294] and *Aberdeenshire Libraries*[295]; *East Lothian Council Archives and Local History*[296]; *Huddersfield Local Studies*[297]; and *Medway Archives and Local Studies*[298]. Once a user "likes" the appropriate page, service updates will appear in their *Facebook* news feed (see above) to highlight certain resources, events, or connect current news items with items in the collection. There are built-in discussion facilities, and services can also send messages to all followers to advertise events (Browne and Rooney-Browne 2008). Sutherland (2010) found that their service's use of *Flickr*, using themed groups of photographs, and competitions, increased user awareness of both print and digital image collections at the library. Their library also received detailed information (dates, places etc.) on published photos which had been identified by users. However, this raises the question of why organisations are turning to photo-sharing sites: it is perhaps easier to upload and host materials with fewer restrictions, and appear visible to many more potential users. Restrictive policies constitute a major barrier to the introduction of Web 2.0 applications in libraries. Many LAs automatically prohibit the use of social networks by staff at work, or block all LA computers (often including public library user terminals), not considering their possibilities for service promotion. This is not true for all LAs, as we can see above, and policies do seem to be loosening.

Many of the library blogs encountered during the benchmarking have since been discontinued. Sutherland (2010) had found initial teething problems with a blog, which was now a "key part of our online communication", highlighting resources and events to customers, and linking back to "library resources or services". From their experience and observation of others, they developed a social media strategy, applicable to emerging technologies and social spaces, to try to ensure that interactions are successful. LS11 was also open to the technologies in principle, "but don't understand their potential". Adoption may

[293] Facebook, 2011f. *Swindon Local Studies & Family History Collection (Swindon Central Library)* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Swindon-Local-Studies-Family-History-Collection-Swindon-Central-Library/103871830795 [Accessed 29 June 2011]

[294] Facebook, 2011g. *Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/aberdeencityandshirearchives [Accessed 29 June 2011]

[295] Facebook, 2011h. *Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Aberdeenshire-Library-and-Information-Service/100660329150 [Accessed 29 June 2011]

[296] Facebook, 2011i. *East Lothian Council Archives and Local History* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/pages/East-Lothian-Council-Archives-Local-History/121137911289662 [Accessed 29 June 2011]

[297] Facebook, 2011j. *Huddersfield Local Studies* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Huddersfield-Local-Studies/101588776564285 [Accessed 29 June 2011]

[298] Facebook, 2011k. *Medway Archives* [online] Available at: http://www.facebook.com/medwayarchives [Accessed 29 June 2011]

be delayed if practitioners are not familiar with such applications in their everyday lives, but CILIP, including the UKEIG special group, and other organisations often offer training days and other support. The JISCMail discussion list *LIS-WEB2*[299] was established in 2009, providing "space to discuss Web 2.0 and its uses in libraries". An example of an online supportive resource is *Libraries and Web 2.0 Wiki*[300], which provides examples, definitions, and suggestions regarding staff training.

In terms of a family history "boom", Parton (2003) observed that record offices had seen the biggest increase in demand, but also noted smaller services in particular may struggle to keep up with demand. LS3 had encountered two types of family historian; "those only interested in names and dates, and those that are interested in a broader family history", as mirrored by Yakel (2004), Duff and Johnson (2003) and others, in making a distinction between genealogy and family history. Similarly LS10 felt that there was an increased "casual" interest in the subject, where more people may be put off by the actual work involved, reflected in the literature (Howells 2001; Francis 2004; Veale 2004a). Skinner (2010) found that librarians recognised the wide range of experience and questioning from genealogical patrons, observing that all levels sought their guidance, but those with less experience "needed more assistance". Busy periods reported by interviewees partly tallies with increased message traffic in newsgroups and message boards during autumn and winter (Veale 2004b).

It was noted that "realistic[ally], without external funding, wider co-operation with partners and a change in policy in managing heritage provision...it is unlikely we would achieve the above in the short term" (LS10). Skinner (2010) also found additional funding was the most cited need amongst librarians. Barry and Tedd (2008) noted similar frustrations and limitations with "time and technology", and reliance on IT departments. LS1 had mixed feelings regarding resource digitisations, torn between increasing worldwide access and possibly reducing the need for physical visitors to their collections. "A change in the way we are measured will be necessary in the future if we are to survive in a cost-conscious

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[299]JISCMail , 2011. *LIS-WEB2 Home Page* [online] Available at: https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=LIS-WEB2 [Accessed 10 May 2011]

[300] Leech, H., Lindfield, M. and Garrett, P., , 2011. *Libraries and Web 2.0* [online] Available at: http://librariesandweb2.wetpaint.com/ [Accessed 10 May 2011]

environment". This change is already happening and is the reason why it is imperative for local studies to exploit website visit statistics. LS2a felt that local studies operated "on a different spectrum from the commercial world" which was "more keen on innovation". Although this is true, provision by commercial sites heightens users' expectations (8.3), and local studies must attempt to keep pace with these.

Skinner (2010) found that her librarian respondents were "for the most part...satisfied" with online resources. As Reid (2003) asserts, the Internet is "not a panacea"; the same idea is articulated further by LS10. "I think too many people think the Internet is the answer to everything and that you can do all your family history via the Internet...Advice from local studies librarians and others is needed to assist users to distinguish between official, authoritative sites and others, which may not be so reliable but still have their merits and uses"; a view supported by Skinner (2010). LS3 stressed the need for awareness of errors in indexing, further suggesting "the public need to be educated in some way" in this regard. Although statements such as this are well-meant, practitioners run the risk of patronising researchers, a significant proportion of who are highly literate in both information and research terms (Chapters 5, 6). Sinko and Peters (1983) found "programs, seminars and classes do serve an important educational function in genealogy, but they presently do not reach, or are not of interest to, many genealogists"; practitioners must view them as "only one component" in researcher education. Skinner (2010) also found that her librarian respondents were "for the most part...satisfied" with online resources. LS1 also distinguishes between sites providing information (e.g. the *1901 Census*) and "those that tell you where information can be found" (e.g. *A2A* and *Familia*), stressing the importance of both kinds and the fact that much "legwork can be done before a visit" to a repository. *Familia* was launched in 1997 as a guide to genealogical resources in public libraries (West Sussex County Council 1997). It was embraced by some authorities more than others, resulting in uneven information around the country; this has also been the case with *A2A* (5.9, Hayes 2003). However, in December 2009 its URL appeared to have been taken over by the UK Borders Agency, and in February 2010 had disappeared completely. The loss of *Familia* leaves virtually no collective access to e-local studies. Access to library sites can be gained through

UK Public Libraries on the Web[301]; however users must then try to navigate through to local studies information. LS12 highlights that the "***Internet is not generally pointing people in the direction of local studies enough".*** Local studies need to find a method of addressing this.

Mawe (2007) and Barry and Tedd (2008) both highlighted the great inconsistency of content, and problems caused by unexpected differences in terminology (8.4). Another priority for improvement affirmed here is a need to improve linking from libraries and also from the authority home page to local studies pages (Andrews 2006; Mawe 2007). Barry and Tedd (2008) recommend that there should be a dedicated staff member for the local studies website, and that much can be learned from other Local Studies sites. Also, like Reid (2003) and others, they suggest the creation of "online help for genealogists", collecting together links and relevant resources. Andrews advocates increasing the detail in collection-level descriptions, because it would "improve [websites'] functionality as finding aids and thus increase accessibility". Andrews and a number of other authors also recommend a "joined-up" approach for local studies marketing across the UK. They recognise that the consistent problems with variable terminology and navigation are not issues practitioners can control, and are therefore unlikely to be addressed at individual authority level. Instead, they could be addressed by a national resource, such as a directory linking directly to Local Studies, or something bigger, such as an adaptation of the plan of Bültmann (2005) for a UK Register of Digital Surrogates.

9.6   Users and Local Studies

As with the present research (8.2), some level of unawareness of local studies awareness was found in other user studies. Matkin and Gordon (2000) discovered that over 25% of survey respondents were unaware of the Derbyshire local studies collection until advised by staff at other branch libraries; Campbell and Mills (1995) were similarly alarmed to learn that nearly 16% of visitors only learned by accident that their service existed. In particular the lack of terminology awareness *is important news for the profession.* Confusion was by no means unusual, and in general participants were not aware of the differences in names, structures and organisations of council departments, and where local studies could be attached (Mawe

[301] Harden, S. And Harden, R., 2011. *UK Public Libraries on the Web* [online] Available at:
http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/town/square/ac940/weblibs.html [Accessed 24 June 2011]

2007; 7.2). Dewe (2002b) does note that the term is not used so much internationally, particularly not in the USA. Confusion of terminology is clearly a barrier to local studies discovery and visibility, particularly to overseas users, where a large proportion of their potential audience lies. Neilson (1999) advocates consideration of how a site will be viewed by international audiences, including terminology used. The lack of a generally recognised term is a barrier to collective marketing.

References to libraries and local studies in genealogy and family history instructional texts will also impact on awareness. Rosemary Bigwood's *Scottish Family Tree Detective* (2006) refers researchers to libraries, but not specifically to local studies. No-one informally consulted by the researcher could recall an instance when *WDYTYA?* has shown any e-local studies material. *BBC Family History* does mention local studies in their *Using Libraries*[302] section, but with no Internet links. Aside from now defunct *Familia, Cyndi's List* makes no mention of local studies in their United Kingdom category, providing access to local repositories only via *ARCHON* at the *National Archives*. As LS12 states (7.8), the "Internet is not generally pointing people in the direction of local studies enough". Local Studies and their terminology must be visible in guides and directories both on and off the Internet, and in other sources researchers might consult. It is likely that potential users are aware of the types of materials and their potential value, but not of the term 'local studies'. S1 and S9 did not necessarily immediately associate libraries with family history information; "it's not somewhere I would have automatically thought to come really for family history stuff" (S9). This is more surprising perhaps than the lack of awareness of local studies. The non-association could be attributed partially to the rise of the Internet, but also to the overlap between archives, libraries/local studies, and record offices. Gill (2007) identified that her research did not reveal why her group were uninterested in using local libraries and archives; she also notes that "there are some resources (such as newspapers and local directories) that are still only available in local studies libraries. None of the interviewees mentioned using or even knowing about these resources", further suggesting the need for active promotion to potential users (Price 2006).

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[302] Churchill, E., 2011. *Using Libraries* [online] Available at:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory/next_steps/adv_03_using_lib_01.shtml [Accessed 30 July 2011]

Agreeing with the lack of familiarity with websites and online services, Insley (2007) found that only 20% of user-survey respondents were aware of and had visited the Warwickshire local studies website. FG1 stressed the importance of local studies in its ability to assist with "...Put[ing] flesh on the Bones' and write up a family history", and strongly advised other genealogists he knew "to seek out the local studies repository relevant to their area of interest". ***This is the crux of what local studies materials can do for family historians.*** It also suggests that researchers attach more value local studies materials as they gain experience. Skinner (2010) proposes that "knowledge of multiple resources suggests a more experienced researcher, who knows where information is"; this increased level of resource and background knowledge leads to a greater number of strategies a family historian can apply to a particular action (Figure 9.1). It also again suggests that although less experienced family historians may benefit most from library assistance, it is more experienced researchers that are likely to be aware of local studies services (9.2). There also appeared to be a high level of trust and respect in local studies materials and staff: The participants also clearly found that e-local studies' offerings were relevant. Watts (2006) noted that a website's contents and effectiveness reflected those in charge of the collection. This, and the affirmation by participants of the need for remote access to these materials; further positive indicators of the value of the services and materials offered, and of a wide remote potential audience.

Researchers moving away from a site quickly if they cannot quickly identify relevance (or losing interest; 'tuning out') is a perfectly understandable reaction (8.5). This was similar to S4 in the shadowing local studies assessment, where his information seeking "wandered off" where sites were not of direct relevance to him. They often appear to have "tunnel vision" for data relating to their own research; could this have emerged as a coping strategy for information overload? Although this represents a considerable challenge to local studies in terms of making sure potential users actually reach the information that is there, it doesn't mean that they shouldn't try. These new researchers still keen for immediate access to information, although as FB2 had more research experience (1-4 years), he had less expectation for information availability, except perhaps with *ScotlandsPeople.* Perhaps this represents the distinction, highlighted by Yakel (2004) or Duff and Johnson (2003), between genealogist and family history researcher. Education from local studies and more experienced researchers (Cummings Cook 1998) could help effect this transformation;

however, this is not likely the whole answer; as with Gill (2007)'s group of family historians; many researchers do not see libraries as a significant part of their education (Kuglin 2004; Yakel 2004).

The interlinked Council Website elements of structure, navigation and terminology were clearly a significant barrier to locating local studies information. Woods (2004, quoted in Berube 2005), illustrates this with what he terms the 'Dead Dog' type of information.

> *Someone wakes up in the morning, opens their curtains and looks out. There in the street is a dead dog. What to do about it? They have an idea that someone is paid to remove dead dogs, so they log on to the Internet and type 'dead dog' and 'road' into Google. Of course, they get a few hundred thousand hits but nothing that looks like an answer. They think again. Yes! It must be the Council's responsibility. So they log on to their Council's Website and click the A-Z. And go to 'D' for 'Dead dog' or 'Dog, dead'. Try it when you get back and see if your council Website will give you an answer using this method. It won't. The Dead Dog type is information that has a straight-forward answer but which is difficult to discover. Someone in Environmental Health or Highways will go out and get the dog. But in order to get at the information you need to arrange this, you must have a good strategy and preferably some idea about how the information sources you are using are structured.*

Woods demonstrates the philosophical underpinning of this section; the way local authority websites are structured is not the way users instinctively search for, or conceive, (local studies/family history) information. Participants were finding information almost by accident: Tucker (2004) also observed that much information was buried deep within sites. With regard to FC2's search example (8.4), it is slightly alarming their LSHP should be result number 4 when searching for local history, but this confirms the findings of Jansen *et al.* (1998) that 58% of searchers examined only one page of search results. Tucker (2006) found 44% of her sites "required some sophistication such as the use of a site index or the ability to search a site, and even more complicated, a return to various other places in the website to find what might be a path of access". A solution has to be found to complex navigation routes. FC2 was pleased to see one LA celebrating local history month, but not subsequently linking through from this to local studies; this highlights the importance of linking through and joining up related services and information (Reid 2003; Tucker 2006; Mawe 2007). Departmental interlinking is an issue which could be eased or improved within existing local authority structures with minimal costs, with better signposting and interlinking between council areas. If navigation is impeded by these factors of LA organisation and terminology,

and the search engine technology is not ideal, then other navigational elements such as site maps become vital. Tucker (2004) noted that genealogy pages were not always easily found, with only 22 (from 48) reached in one click from the homepage; similarly Mawe (2007) felt remote users would benefit from LSHPs linking directly to library catalogues and relevant databases.

Consideration of both potential national and international audiences is vital for local studies. FA1 felt that some Scottish collections had done some specialised local studies service marketing, targeted to genealogical tourism; Scotland is likely (as Ireland would be) to attract enquires from overseas. She "wondered if there was any significance about it being such a good site and it being in Scotland... [if] they had more enquiries from people in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and they'd realised they needed to cater for that sort of audience"; if tourism was more economically important in certain communities, they may address this kind of thing with more gusto (Frazier 2001; Little 2007). Design and presentation of sites was generally only discussed by participants when problems or issues arose. Sexton *et al.* (2004b) found that personal leisure researchers preferred simpler designs. S10 felt one was "not a very professional looking...but the information is the important thing "; users are prepared to struggle through with a website if it holds really good content (Edwards 1998). Navigation is clearly the biggest barrier so far, and it would be advisable and proactive for local studies to cover (or have covered by IT departments) all bases in terms of search terms (7.6) to encourage both internal and external resource discovery.

Local Studies elements and content was important and relevant to participants (8.5). As Reid (2003) thought, genealogists were often keen to develop into local history; Williams (1996) also observes, "While many searchers do seem well satisfied with some names written on a genealogical chart, others, once they have named great-grandfather, must locate his house. They find themselves deeply curious about his neighbours. For these people, a study of local history has been entered on", possibly entirely unconsciously. Several participants stated their intention "to go back to that site and go through it because there were a lot of links". FB3 was likewise in praise of one site highlighting their digitised holdings in *Historical Directories*: "it's useful that there's a link to that, because people often say they have directories, but they don't say that they're digitised anywhere else!" This highlights the

importance of local studies combining both local and national resources (Reid 2003). Some sites were noted for their lack of links. "In looking at the sites you asked for comment on I do not recall seeing any mention of, or links to, county or local historical/archaeological societies of which there is a great number" (FG1). FB1 further emphasised that "links are important...that's why some of my favourite websites are my favourites, because they have good links and I can find them there". Mawe (2007) also found that external links was a feature that encouraged return visits. In terms of catalogues and databases, Fachry, Kamps and Zhang (2010) found titles and abstracts were considered most important by users in assessing the relevance of materials, so for remote users they can be very valuable. Remotely, instructions have to be clear, as there is no opportunity to ask a member of staff (Cox *et al.* 2007). The problem of retrospective digitisation was also highlighted by Higgs (2006) and others. As Reid and Macafee (2007) note, remote users are not financially contributing, and therefore local users should be prioritised; however, e-local studies benefits, and is equally demanded by local researchers too. They also act as advertising for a locality, benefitting local taxpayers with spending in the local economy from any research tourism.

Ideally different levels of information should be provided for different experience levels of family historians (FD2). Tucker (2006) also observed archival websites "very rarely acknowledge those skilled at family history...provid[ing] information only for beginners". The desire for consistency across LA sites is unsurprising given the tendency of family historians to repeat research strategies for new directions or queries (6.6; Duff and Johnson 2003), as reflected in the model of their online research behaviour (Figure 9.1). Although this would greatly improve visibility and the ease of macro-marketing, it is not a realistic deliverable. In terms of content, participants also felt that e-Local Studies should concentrate on what makes them unique. As Ciolek (1997) notes, a quality information source is advised to champion "*locally* developed materials", and "place local resources in the *context* of all globally available relevant data" (emphasis added). It is clear that local studies and online presences are valuable to these people, but more work needs to be done to improve visibility. Gill (2007) observed her "'new breed' of family historians are not using the local studies libraries and archives, and that this may represent a problem for those institutions"; likewise Culbertson, Ernest and Level (2005) observed that users seeking information for recreational activities were now far less likely to access a library, either branch or online, for this

information. Local studies are not necessarily looking for family history researchers to become hard core users, but just be aware that local studies exists, and is available to them when they are at an appropriate point in their research.

Moving forward from this, Chapter 10 concludes the thesis and examines the contributions to knowledge, offering recommendations for future research and for the future of e-Local Studies provision.

10.1 Introduction

From even as long as 10 years ago, the horizon of family history research is unrecognisable. Researchers have "unparalleled public access to historical records in archives both material and digital, while social networking genealogy websites…facilitate the publication of virtual family trees alongside the 'rediscovery' of long-lost 'cousins'" (Kramer 2010). In amongst this vast expanse of easily accessible raw data, local studies materials can add *real context and value,* both in person and remotely to researchers' findings and experience (1.2,1.4); the foliage on the family tree, or flesh on the bones of ancestors (FG2). Practitioners and collections have had a long-established role (1.2) in assisting family historians both as information providers, and of guides and interpreters to that information (7.1). However, for this to continue at the best-quality level, practitioners need confidence in their knowledge of resources, research techniques and strategies (Paul 1995; Webster 2005; Stahr 2003; Ralston 1986; Barber 2007). It has been speculated that lack of confidence had played a part in past attitudes to genealogical researchers (Billeter 2001; Cooper 2005); Davey (1985 quoted in Ralston 2006) suggested that, due to their very nature, genealogical enquiries can have a lower success rate compared with 'standard' academic enquiries. As many authors have attested, attitudes to family history and its practitioners are now predominantly positive (letters of response to Webster 2005; Reid 2003); this is also demonstrated by much discussion of services and initiatives in the local studies professional literature (1.4, 2.5). Internet resources bring huge convenience, but clearly a significant number of family historians still wish to work with physical archival and historical materials and value these within their research (Skinner 2010).

The Internet has greatly increased the potential audience for collections that once may have attracted only those in the local area, to the whole country, and indeed the world. The popularity of certain e-resources and the immense take-up of Internet research suggest that there may be value in applying the same kind of visibility to e-local studies. Practitioners should "make research possible for remote users" (LS7). It has been suggested they should

also try to harness researcher interest to raise status of local studies and archives (Hawkins 1998; Litzer; Mackay 2002; Robinson 2006 and others). This research has sought a better understanding e-family history resources, their users, and how they are used (Paul 1995) from the users' perspective, in order to elucidate ways in which local studies collections can increase their online visibility, encouraging increased usage and demonstrating the added value they can give to family history research.

Focussing on the three areas of resources, users and e-local studies, this research aimed to: identify, examine, and categorise sources of, and services for, e-family history within the United Kingdom; investigate the information-seeking strategies and information literacy competencies of users of family historians in respect of online resources, and formulate methods by which local studies collections can, more visibly, enhance and add value to 'online family and community engagements'. The foregoing chapters have explored these central foci and their intersections; this chapter summarises the more significant findings and offers recommendations of practical advice for local studies practitioners, and for further research.

10.2   *Contribution to Knowledge*

The present study offers contributions to knowledge in several respects; from findings in each of the three strands of the research, and also in terms of the methods used. The most prominent of these are the model of family historian online research behaviour (Figure 9.1); genealogical fact (Figure 1.2); evaluative criteria for e-family history resources (5.3), and contribution to the local studies literature. In regard to methodological contribution, the research offers a successful implementation of a diary study in LIS research (Friday 2007b). Using a diary as a data collection instrument is still comparatively rare within qualitative research, especially outside the medical and health-related studies, and lacks serious discussion within the majority of methodological research texts. The study adds to the sparse literature in this area, as a demonstration that, given the right circumstances, diaries (in particular largely unstructured diaries) can be an appropriate method in LIS research, and can be successfully applied. As earlier discussed (3.7.2) diary use in Information Research has generally not been very popular, and with a handful of recent exceptions, has tended

toward the use of structured, short-term instruments (Goodall 1994). The present research has provided a successful implementation of unstructured diaries as a qualitative data collection method, and shown that the method can be sustained over an extended period.

Family history research has become a vibrant topic in many fields of research (Kramer 2011, 2010; Little 2010, 2007 and others). Although, as noted earlier (3.11), the area of the study concerned with the demographics of the community (Chapter 4) has already become dated, this thesis will add to the body of literature concerned with genealogists and family historians and enhance the understanding of how the demographics of this community are changing over time. This also reinforces the notion that family history now attracts a much wider audience; both in terms of demographic spread, younger and increased number of male researchers, and geographic spread. The study is also the first work to look exclusively at online behaviour and interactions with sources. In terms of the understanding how users go about their research, the study has identified a taxonomy of search actions, strategies and outcomes (Table 6.3) identified within their behaviour. Further to this, the development of the model of family historian online research behaviour (Figure 9.1) and the definition of the genealogical fact (Figure 1.2) are the most significant contributions to knowledge. There has been limited work so far on the research behaviour genealogists and family historians, and this research will sit beside work of Yakel (2004), Francis (2004), Fulton (2006,2009a,2009b), and Duff and Johnson (2003).

One major aspiration of the research has been to promote greater understanding of the e-resources in use for UK family history research amongst the local studies community, after Webster (2005) and others (9.1). This has been achieved with the construction of appropriate resource evaluative criteria (5.3, 9.4) specifically targeted to genealogical and family history resources, which highlight areas to be considered in their appraisal. Some may question the need for further additions to this area of literature, given that many authors have written evaluative criteria. Aimed to be usable in practice, they have a level of flexibility, allowing them to operate on a number of levels depending on the resources in question. For example, they can be applied to an individual's homepage and family tree, or to larger link sites and databases.

The ways in which the family history research community views the online resources available also valuably contribute to e-local studies, indicating what does and does not work for them with current online provision. The local studies literature is primarily practitioner-based, which in itself has both strengths and weaknesses. With the exception of authors such as Dewe (1987, 1991, 2002a), there are very few academic studies; and even fewer (Reid 2003; Reid and Macafee 2007; Andrews 2006; Mawe 2007; Barry and Tedd 2008) are concerned with e-local studies, so the present thesis does provide a significant addition to the literature in this area. Enhanced understandings of the changing nature of the e-family history community, their online research behaviour, and the evaluative criteria all contribute to a perhaps unique perspective from which recommendations for e-local studies can be offered. These (9.6) are a more practical contribution to knowledge, but with real potential for application within the local studies community.

Certain findings from the study are transferable to different areas of research. There is great scope for transferability of genealogical fact (Figure 1.2) into other areas of information behaviour, in terms of using the intersection of items to define what people are actually seeking. The structure of the model (Figure 9.1) could also (at least partially) apply to other hobbyist and serious leisure pursuits. There is also a high level of applicability of the evaluative criteria (5.3) to other local history and archival online information. Findings and recommendations for e-Local Studies can similarly apply to other parts of library (and archive) services; equally, website findings and recommendations can be applied to LAs in general. In terms of the transferability of methods, the study has enhanced the understanding of how qualitative diaries can be successfully implemented within LIS research. In addition, it has highlighted other methods not commonly used in this sector, such as online focus groups, and using focus groups for website evaluation. These could be applied in a wide variety of circumstances throughout LIS research, both in academic and applied studies. This methodical knowledge could also be transferred into archival research.

10.3   Users

The user strand of the research formed the main focus of primary data collection. It endeavoured to construct a demographic profile of the user community for UK e-family

history resources; and to evaluate the information and digital literacy, and information-seeking competencies of these users, and identify and explore factors influencing their behaviour in the 'real world' context of their research. To truly explore the user perspective, user behaviour has been examined holistically (Orbach 1991), finding out what is "real to them" (Dervin 1992) (2.6) as they research at home. Who is using UK e-family history resources? What is their research behaviour? Do users use/display their knowledge of information literacy when researching in their own homes?

Family historians have demonstrated themselves to be an extremely diverse community of users; generally well educated (mostly beyond secondary education) with a great deal of experience in working with computers, the Internet, and with their own research. The user group defined by the survey (Chapter 4) did have a predominance of females, but not excessively so. Although the majority of respondents were 45 or over, younger researchers were more evident here than in previous studies. 'Beginner' family historians were also more prominent; however high levels of research experience were also displayed. Membership of both public libraries and FHSs increases with length of family history research experience, suggesting that the value of libraries and local studies demonstrates itself to researchers over time. A higher rate of library membership than in the general population indicates that they are receptive to what libraries have to say. More than half the responding user community reported having used e-genealogical resources for over 3 years (although there was greater use from those outside the UK).

Research can be obsessive; addictive; universal, yet personal and individual; the excitement of a constantly shifting investigation; looking for different things at different times. Very few are *just* interested in genealogy; although most investigations begin by looking for genealogical facts, they quickly open out into family history. Research can often be seasonal, with large gaps; equally it can take place intensively for short periods. Most takes place at home (indeed 63% of survey respondents research *only* at home), and at any time of day; flexibilities effected by e-resources. There are both information and affective needs and outcomes in research. The taxonomy of specific categories (6.4), not explored before, gives insight into the research process, but can also give indications to instructional librarians as to strategies to try. Queries are reframed (Duff and Johnson 2003) into searches for genealogical

facts: the intersection between any two components of a names, date, place or event (1.6, 6.4). Family historian research behaviour can be categorised in terms of actions (seeking of genealogical facts, local or social history; communicating with other researchers or resources; locating resources or instructive information; managing own information), strategies (search modifications and incorporation of background knowledge) and outcomes (outcome; direction (projected and actual)), although the former two categories are by far the most concrete. Further to these categories, a model (Figure 9.1; 9.4) of family historian online research behaviour has been developed, which illustrates the circular, yet continuous, pattern of actions, strategies and outcomes. As with a piece of string being wrapped around a pencil, the search repeats yet extends, and with every revolution a researcher's knowledge of background issues and context grows. Strategies are similarly a circular system in themselves; they can also be repeated and transferred to new enquiries; a key aspect of information literacy. This largely increases with experience (Duff and Johnson 2003); possibly specifically with Internet experience (Hölscher and Strube 2000). Is it likely then that it is the lack of Internet experience that inhibits transferability? This appears to be the case for participant S4 (6.9), but not for several others. As much as trends within researchers can be identified, they are still individual and must be considered as such. Also highly significant is users' high emotional attachment to their research and its outcomes; both positively and negatively. Negative outcomes are, however, largely outweighed by positivity and satisfaction.

As in the berrypicking of Bates (1999), the search for ancestors constantly changes with each new discovery. Equally, reflecting Francis' (2004) circular pattern of GSP; and ELIS; unless for a specific book, article or presentation, research is without a specific start and end point (Savolainen 1995; Spink and Cole 2001). It also can be regarded as Serious Leisure (Stebbins 2009): family historians display perseverance; a career path, effort in acquiring skill, personal affective benefits, social benefits, and identification with the hobby. These were again demonstrated here, and by Gill (2007) and others. There is no typical researcher or user; they have a great diversity of information needs and experience (Sinko and Peters 1983; Pettigrew, Durrance and Unruh 2002). They use names (in particular), places, and dates as common search terms (Duff 2002; Duff and Johnson 2002, 2003). In terms of their information literacy competencies, the vast majority are aware of the problems of genealogical

information and sources online and largely appeared able to police themselves, as with the construction of their own social networks (Yakel 2004; Yakel and Torres 2007 and others) for lifelong learning and skill acquisition without library or archival input. Barth (1997) observed an apprehensive relationship between the researchers and archivists/librarians.

Importantly, users were generally highly information literate (in the application of existing knowledge and strategies; stashing of information for future use; deductive reasoning abilities; looking for ancestors in likely places), and often extremely sophisticated in their defined information needs (Skov 2009; Butterworth 2006). Why is this the case? As discussed above, many have educated themselves (Yakel and Torres 2007); it perhaps also relates to the methodical nature and of the practice and researchers' affective attachment (6.8). Poorer information literacy competencies were displayed through a lack of awareness moving between sites; lack of confidence in computing and Internet abilities; and frustration with inability to find what they wanted. Some also could not immediately see the transferability of applicability of e-local studies elsewhere. There was also a lack of awareness for research techniques, particularly in regard to the civil registration records, in other parts of UK, although in the shadowing exercise they did try and apply prior knowledge in approaching the query. They "personalise places"; trying to establish a personal link ("Oldham Council...I was born not so very far away...I had a girlfriend in Oldham once you know – God that's a long time ago" (S4)). LS8 felt people and places were especially tied. They develop social relationships with other researchers (Yakel 2004, Yakel and Torres 2007) and with ancestors, and are keen to share information (Yakel; Fulton 2009b) where this is reciprocated.

Local studies practitioners displayed a largely positive attitude to family historians (additionally, more initiatives for family history services have been observed emerging in the local studies literature), but acknowledged that some could be (at least initially) demanding. They had observed a significant continuing increase in interest in family history, although many considered that the 'family history boom' was not as visible within libraries and local studies as it had been online. They had also observed an increase in younger researchers, although the majority "tend[ed] to be middle aged/elderly with time on their hands" (LS8). Researchers had not been found to be any more demanding (although always some exceptions), although there were raised expectations of online information availability.

10.4 Resources

The massive expansion of e-resources has been identified as one of the major drivers behind the enhanced popularity of family history. Indeed, LS1 noted "Whether the growth of sites on the Internet is a cause or an effect of the family history boom I am not sure"; it is unlikely this will ever be determined for certain. This research has sought to identify UK sources of and services facilitating e-family history, and scrutinise existing information source and website criteria applicable to these resources. Also, to formulate specific evaluative criteria for e-family history resources, and apply these criteria to a purposeful sample of those resources earlier identified. Through these objectives, the study examined the characteristics of family history information on the Internet. What constitutes a good quality e-family history resource, and how should such resources be evaluated? Which resources are being used by researchers, and how? Which resources are visible to users and why? How do commercially "branded" genealogy websites pull users in?

In identifying relevant evaluative criteria (5.3) for these resources, elements from general information, websites, and family history subject knowledge in their overall assessments were considered (5.2). Criteria were determined under the headings of their Provider; Scope and Coverage; Genealogical Significance; Types/Formats of Content; Accuracy and Reliability; Cost; Design and Presentation; Usability and Accessibility; and "Uniqueness". The goal was for the criteria to be a useable resource for local studies practitioners, increasing awareness and knowledge of the characteristics of e-family history resources, in order to ensure appropriate quality service levels for family historians. They contribute to both practitioners and researchers in terms of their awareness of the nature of e-family history resources, and contributing to their information literacy.

Users considered their 'favourite' sites as both "loved" sources, or those continually returned to again and again. Practitioners identified that researchers go to the well publicised resources; these larger resources have a greater relative popularity. Being deeper, they are likely to offer more personal interest and a wider scope; therefore users are more likely to return there than to a smaller resource. A smaller site might not be returned to because all

relevant information for a researcher could be extracted in one sitting. Four resources were universally used and discussed more than others: *Ancestry*, *FamilySearch*, *ScotlandsPeople*, and *Genes Reunited* (and in the diaries, *Google*). These are predominantly large (national/international), giving a larger pool of potential users, and deal in concrete genealogical facts. Users seek out: quality informational content; unique records; repeated success with quality data; continuing development; familiarity. They returned for ease of searching, quality of indexing, value for money, and the right quality of content, and success with that content; prioritising content over cost. They are highly aware of data quality and security issues, and can evaluate information in terms of an individual record, or piece of information/fact, rather than an overall resource (reflected in genealogical literature). Inclusion of primary data/information promotes trust. They were largely willing to pay a reasonable amount for high quality genealogical information (although this seemed less the case for American researchers (Garrett 2010; FC3)); and had an understanding of the costs associated with resource creation and maintenance. Commercial resources were extremely convenient, and even money-saving in comparison to long-distance research. In any case, resources *must be successful* for researchers.

New resources are discovered through word-of-mouth, societies, publications, and online through links, mailing lists, and search engines (predominantly *Google*). Searching could also discover others' research, although it was not often useful in that respect. Researchers qualify searches with places and subjects; this can inject new ideas, also enabling serendipity. Some participants didn't conceive *Google* as a resource locator, but as a resource in itself ("on" *Google*, instead of via). *Google* was also much used for discovery and navigation to resources and information. Participants instinctively favoured familiar resources for known items, and searched for unknown items (Rieh 2003). Many sources were highly visible and memorable, and as a result attractive to users; this did not appear to be the case at this time for e-local studies.

10.5 e-Local Studies

The final section of the research, e-Local studies, sought to identify resources provided by UK local studies collections that facilitate e-family history, and discuss practical methods of

increasing the visibility of these to users; and identify methods by which these public library resources can add value to online family and community research. The research asked: what is the current status of the web presences of local studies collections and e-family history provision? What could and should local studies practitioners be providing in terms of e-family history provision? Are local studies collections visible online to researchers? How can the online visibility of local studies collections be improved? The findings from both this and the previous strands have been drawn together to offer recommendations for e-local studies provision.

Within services names, local studies is significantly the most frequently-used term; related terms Archives, Local History, Heritage (and various combinations) were also observed. Although all the titles are all related, the numerous variations can be confusing for first-time and less confident users (8.4). Users had an awareness of local studies materials in a physical sense; however, these were *not* necessarily associated with the term local studies. Even within authorities, some practitioners considered that local studies was not a prominent concept, even with its wide applicability to many roles (7.2); Barber (2002a) identified a local studies "identity problem" within LAs and with the public. This is worrying for the local studies profession; given that it seems not to be universally understood by users, is the term 'local studies' now a worthless brand? Although it will never be nearly as strong as the library brand, it is a brand with strong associations for many, which is still valuable. The problem is not with term itself, but with a sometimes apparently scattergun approach of many different terms where users initially expect consistency, and a lack of collective focus. However, 'local studies' does need to be pushed out and emphasised more if the term is going to stay relevant online.

Very few participants were aware of local studies websites prior to the research. In spite of usability issues, the content and usefulness of e-local studies sites was demonstrated to researchers, and they thought they would use these within their future research. However, *variations in quality are off-putting and a small discouragement*. Many did not see the immediate connection between of the local studies websites that they assessed, and those elsewhere that could be applied to their own research. More importantly, researchers were receptive to (if not already aware of) the value that local studies materials could add to their

family histories, but more work needs to be done to improve visibility and an online focal point for local studies would be valuable. There is definitely a demand for e-local studies materials *where they are available and made known*.

In terms of their service input into LSHPs, the majority of practitioners have no influence or control over the design and structure of "their" web pages, because the whole LA site is standardised. They do however largely author and supply the content for the pages. Website issues had both LA and local studies-related elements; but very few users identified the difference, or particularly cared about it. Navigation was the most variable element of web sites, but also one of the most important for users (8.4); indeed navigation, terminology and structure were strongly interrelated; council websites are not structured in an intuitive way for information seeking (Woods quoted in Berube 2005; 8.3); users need to be highly information-literate to make good use of them (S6). Users found library home pages easy to identify; this was not the case with LSHPs, and there was not always a path between the two. Site search engines are not always effective, and tend to be tied to terminology in use. These all have a negative effect on the internal visibility of local studies; indeed McMenemy (2007) identified that some Scottish library websites were "extremely poor information resources" in these regards. Local Studies would benefit from being transparent and clear in their description of collections, services, and availability of online information; the 'whats and wheres' of their collection; contact details; and up-front guidance regarding charging and procedures. Local studies practitioners saw the role of their website as very similar for local and remote users, especially since these groups were not mutually exclusive (Reid 2003; Reid and Macafee 2007). Except on sites where actual e-content was present, the 'offline' role of information provider was largely eclipsed by the description and advertising of the materials and services offered; concentrating less on actual information provision through their websites, excepting information about the collection and service itself.

Three areas of e-local studies content were investigated: internally hosted (within the LA website), an external site (under authority control), and contributions to an independent or collaborative site. Some content was presented by just over three-quarters of LSHPs. Although internally-hosted content was most common, often this was not to the same depth of that seen externally (which mostly received additional funding). Some had excellent

resources *not linked* from local studies. Participant response to e-local studies content was generally enthusiastic if it was found; but much good quality content was missed by some in shadowing/focus groups. Authorities and practitioners need to instigate joined-up linking; both between departments, and possibility with other authorities. Most sites offered at least some links; these should be core e-local studies provision. Links were not always offered by local studies (sometimes in an authority-wide repository); local studies should ensure they link through where this is the case. Despite being considered an important part of the role of e-local studies (7.3), the quality of collection description was variable and not attempted by some services. One third provided a research service, or have one elsewhere in the LA. There is more provision of resource, rather than research guides; again not consistent across all services. Users had positive reactions to *Ancestry* Library Edition (offered by just over half of services) and other online databases, and user education and instructive materials. Users really liked links, and the ability to look for results on a personal level. No matter the quality of the site, any contact with the service must still run smoothly.

Practitioners held their main sense of importance of their websites in promotional and informational terms. They were not overly confident in their websites, although they did reflect that e-local studies was in its "infancy" (LS10), and "only scratches the surface of what might be done" (LS4). The main reasons for this seemed consistent across the board: lack of staff time and resources; and inflexibility of LA technical and political constraints. These were also barriers to future development, alongside a shortage of technical skills. Services aimed to develop and increase content and increase resource descriptions and user education materials; however, they realised that they would require external funding to achieve their aims. Services felt they had a role in offering guidance for Internet research. Aside from interpreting records and information, Wall (2005) suggests this guidance would be particularly effective in terms of keeping research records, maintaining an efficient research practice, and highlighting less common specialised resources. Email enquiry services, and the compilation of useful links to resources (Reid 2003; Diggle 2009) should also be provided. Additionally, users felt that a minimum level of service should include an OPAC or more specified holdings list; historical information on the local area; local indexes; and clear instructions on how to obtain information or use services remotely. Unique local resources dominated their wish lists, the best example of what local studies can offer, although users

(and practitioners) realised that only so much was possible. Users further suggested that e-local studies could learn from commercial resources' simplicity and clarity of design and layout; usability; navigation and signposting; general visibility; and transparency of services. Content elements to be considered were images of sample documents; locally relevant databases; the context of collections, and the ability to search indexes and purchase related images online. Although many e-local studies sites already feature these elements, these areas are where many local authorities are missing out.

Visibility online is complicated with the range of names and differing authority management structures in which services operate. This caused problems for users, who do not expect these differences in terminology (8.4), nor, as has been highlighted here, high levels of inconsistency of content (Mawe 2007; McMenemy 2007; Barry and Tedd 2008). LSHPs were not always easily located; especially where content was provided on several pages, the pages were not always consistently linked from a central point, or highlighted to each other. There was often other substantial local history content elsewhere and *unlinked* in the service structure. Confusion of terminology is clearly a barrier to the discovery and visibility of local studies, particularly for overseas users, a significant part of their potential audience. Experienced researchers were more likely to see the value and applicability of local studies (4.5, 8.2), and reaffirmed the need for access to these materials. Participants were keen to personalise their search on local studies sites (8.3); they made realistic, 'real world' evaluations; although some admitted spending more time than they otherwise may have done. They evaluated sites against previous experience (which also became progressive through the exercise). Users felt they were spoiled by the wide availability of online information elsewhere (8.3). Some did not immediately see the macro-applicability of local studies to other locations (8.3, 8.7).

Examination of the search engine visibility (7.6) of LSHPs discovered less than optimal retrieval of LSHPs, especially in conjunction with the terms family history and genealogy. This is concerning, as *Google,* the method reported by users as their main access point to resources (5.5, 5.7, 8.4), is not providing reliable access to LSHPs. It may be related to differing service names (7.2) and differing terminologies; however, a remote user, whether in the UK or overseas, will not necessarily know the correct terms for an area. These findings,

along with the fact that only two interviewees discussed search engine optimisation in any way, suggest that access could be improved by provision of training to staff in this area. As Reid and Macafee (2007) stress, local studies collections and their value-added collections must be easily *visible, reachable and discoverable* from wherever users start navigating (Chapters 5, 8). So, where *do* users start navigating? This research has substantiated that it is *not* from LA home; it is most likely to be through *Google*, but their 'landing point' within the site will depend on their search terms and the particular structure of that authority. There is now virtually no collective access from elsewhere aside from *UK Public Libraries on the Web*[303]; and even from here, users still have the issue of navigating from library home, which as chapters 7 and 8 attest, is not always easy or clear; this needs to be made as *simple and obvious* as possible. Had data collection happened after its collapse, *Familia* would have taken a greater part in the discussion with users and practitioners. Although many e-local studies resources have improved and grown in the time since data collection, they must continue to develop to stay relevant. Since the collapse, commercial and national resources (such as *Ancestry*, *ScotlandsPeople* and the *NA*) have moved on so much, both in terms of content and visibility[304], that e-local studies looks like it has stood still in comparison.

Most services considered (7.3) that their websites as important promotional tools (e.g. with Events and 'What's On' sections). Few other electronic means of promotion were discussed; LS6 relied on links from other websites and being "picked-up" by search engines. LS9 noted encouragingly that their site was "optimised to achieve the best possible visibility on search engines (Search Engine Optimisation, SEO)". Web 2.0 applications were not much in use at the time of data collection; however their use has subsequently become much more prominent. LS11 was open to the technologies in principle, "but don't understand their potential". New developments such as these may be vital to ensure the survival of services, by demonstrating their relevance to today's users. There is a need for connectivity and joined-up thinking (Criddle 1999 and others; 8.4, 8.5, 8.7) between information and service *regardless* of the service structure of the departmental information provider of the information. The impression given by a website is incredibly important as it reflects and influences what users will get out of the service (LS12; Tucker 2004). Services must

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[303] Harden, S. and Harden, R., 2001. *UK Public Libraries on the Web*. [online] Available at:
http://ds.dial.pipex.com/town/square/ac940/ukpublib.html [Accessed 9 October 2011]
[304] Thinking specifically of *Ancestry*'s television advertising.

continually strive not only to improve their resources, but also to maintain and promote the identity of local studies.

10.6   Recommendations

- Service provision: links; content (where possible); research services (where possible); user education; and content targeted to different experience levels.

Reid (2003) and many others advocate using websites for service delivery and not just for advertising. A basic way to do this is the creation of an "online help for genealogists", collecting together links and relevant resources. Users are likely to return often if they know there are stable links to other resources reliably available (8.5). 'Theme'-ing resources to particular user groups is also a popular approach said to increase stickiness (Holland and Baker 2001). Links should be core e-local studies provision, as they enhance the service at minimal cost. Here, to avoid confusion, practitioners should make it as obvious as possible when the user is leaving their site. e-Local studies content is also highly desirable (8.5), although the problems in its production have been noted (7.8). Practitioners should aspire to get as much content online as possible, as well as providing paid research services where resources allow. Both users (8.5) and practitioners (7.2) felt this was something local studies should be providing. Barry and Tedd (2008), Watts (2006) and Tucker (2006) all advocate using digitised materials to promote use of the site and collection by demonstrating the types of materials local studies holds.

Following on from above, services should try and provide user education on varying levels. As Hoskins (1967) noted, "It has occasionally been said that in trying to guide local historians into the paths of righteousness and away from the amateurish imbecilities that often marked much of their work in the past, I am in danger of 'taking all the pleasure out of local history'". Researchers were generally very sophisticated (Reid and Macafee 2007), but local studies can sometimes appear patronising (8.4): it is best if this is avoided. As the value of local studies appears to demonstrate itself to more experienced researchers (4.5, Skinner 2010), Tucker (2006) notes "we provide information only for beginners" (8.7). Reid and

Macafee (2007) found that users are continually "actively engaged" with local studies materials, just as family historians are with their research. They are (or have great potential to be) one and the same. Practitioners need to be able to give encouragement to those with low confidence, but not patronise those older patrons who do have the skills and ability, as experienced by some of the older focus group members (8.5). In addition to 'actual records', researchers are looking for instructive information about records and resources on the Internet (6.5); this is an ideal opportunity for local studies to demonstrate their expertise (many services already do (7.3)). Parton (2003) recommends that services continue to develop web-based user education for research skills and resource use; practitioners also felt this was important (7.2, 7.8), and that interpreting information was a key part of their role. With so many users researching only from home, there is limited opportunity for intervention, except in a remote manner. Therefore library and local studies information presented online should be as clear and accessible as possible. Placing this online opens the expertise to as wide an audience as possible, and also offers a possible entry point (from a search engine) into other areas of e-local studies. Local studies practitioners would benefit from taking into account the criteria and research behaviour taxonomy set out here (6.4, 9.3). They also need to be aware of the appropriate research methods and techniques for the whole of the UK. Substantial differences exist in electronic availability and informational content of the (particularly) civil registration records, between England and Wales and other parts of the United Kingdom (6.9). The unpredictable nature of research means that an ancestor could emerge from any part of the country (4.5); therefore practitioners must be prepared to be approached for assistance on the use of systems or records in another jurisdiction from the one in which they are resident and/or employed.

- Navigation and interlinking

A priority for improvement which has been affirmed in the present research is a need to improve linking from libraries and also from authority home pages to local studies pages (Andrews 2006; Watts 2006; Mawe 2007). Barry and Tedd (2008) stress that sites should be "easy to use and to navigate". This should be the case for any quality information resource (5.2, 5.3); further supported by participants (8.4, 8.7). The "lack of standardization among websites, and routes to information" (Tucker 2006) is something that it is unrealistic to address, given that the control of this lies largely with individual LA structures. However,

practitioners can aid discovery of other substantial local history content elsewhere and *unlinked* in the service structure (7.3, 8.4) by establishing links to and from, or by lobbying IT departments to improve linkage. Even where local studies are no longer part of libraries in LA structural terms (7.2), *it is strongly advised that the LSHP should still be linked from libraries*. Practitioners should promote and push for prominent linking between all related departments as good practice.

- ▪ Terminology

Improvement in this area is difficult. The terminology variances have occurred because of the individuality of each area; however; (e-)local studies, to the unexposed, is not the most visible or understandable of access terms, especially in countries where it is not in use (e.g. the USA), or areas in the UK where alternative terms are used. In order to minimise the impact of variable terminology, practitioners should try to promote consistency within an authority. It would be advisable and proactive for local studies to cover (or have covered by IT departments) all bases in terms of search terms (7.6) to encourage both internal and external resource discovery. This should include 'see also' referrals in A-Zs, and inclusion of metadata on pages in order that content is retrieved even if sought under alternative terms.

- ▪ Push out information.

Local studies practitioners should not rely on (potential) users coming to them; they must push information out to them by whatever means. Price (2006) stresses that libraries must "keep talking and explaining. People don't have any chance of using what they don't know about". They must communicate to *users and non-users* about remote electronic access to library resources. E-Local Studies must be accessible from, or be referenced from, the places where researchers go looking for resource recommendations. *The Genealogist's Internet* (Christian 2009) makes reference to several e-resources created by local studies, as local history, but at no point does he mention their connection to local studies services; equally there is *no mention* of local studies in the index. *Local studies must be more present* (or indeed present at all) *in popular guides like this one,* so that potential users can be aware of the terminology. Following from earlier discussions (8.2), Christian only points to libraries

through *UK Public Libraries on the Web*. Pushing out information to guides and directories like this will enable them to point potential users in the direction of e-local studies. It is important to keep promoting services through the press (Melrose 2005), drawing attention resources, especially those available remotely. Local studies should also highlight their *Ancestry* subscriptions and other relevant resources in all promotional material.

Just as previously (Reid and Macafee 2007) services and organisations have been expected to have a website, now they are increasingly expected to operate social networking profiles. These, and other Web 2.0 applications, facilitate active user engagement with services, materials and staff (Browne and Rooney-Browne 2008; Sutherland 2010), an important aspect of relationship marketing (Holland and Baker 2001). A profile allows information to be pushed out to followers without them having to 'physically' visit the service website. Figure 9.1 is an example of *Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service* demonstrating the visible and clear linking of their services to a current event, the contemporary series of *WDYTYA?*

Figure 10.1: Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service[305]

Similarly, *Am Baile* frequently use *Facebook* (Fig. 7.22; 7.6) as a joined-up approach to link current news events (e.g. 'on this day in 1806') with e-resources in their collection. These are positive examples of joined-up promotion using social technologies.

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[305] Posted on *Facebook* by Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service [Accessed 30 September 2011]

- Maintain a local studies identity

Maintaining the employment of specialist local studies staff is imperative to upholding the service's identity (Crosby 2002; Dixon 2011; 7.2). Barry and Tedd (2008) further recommend that there should be a dedicated staff member for the local studies website. Identity can also be improved by pushing out information, helping users (and potential users) to learn of the existence of (e-)local studies materials and associate these with our nomenclature. Continuing to consult and consider both users AND nonusers (Melrose 2002; Pendleton and Chatman 1998; Price 2006) will also raise awareness of services and terminology.

- *Google* Visibility

Practitioners should generally push for more search engine optimisation. As has been discussed previously (5.5, 8.4, 9.5) it is extremely important for collections and e-resources to be findable by *Google* using the whole range of keywords associated with local studies and family history. Remote users, the very ones who are likely not to have an awareness of service names, will start to investigate on the basis of previous experience with their home collections and other local studies encounters. Services should also include local place names, including those from pre-1974 historical counties, as some researchers are likely be searching on those terms. This also ties in with the identity issue; users would need to know the correct terminology in order to locate LSHPs; it would be good practice to ensure local studies could be retrieved via other associated terms used by services (7.2, 9.5). Pilmer (2011) identifies that "more often than not people use their own favourite webpages and *Google*" (as supported by this research). He suggests services could create specifically-targeted front-ends for user groups, if necessary freely-available blogs, then linking to local studies content on the authority sites; these may be more easily visible to *Google.*

- Highlight uniqueness

Researchers were especially keen to access local resources that were not available elsewhere (8.7). e-Local studies should carve out and exploit their niche by championing "***locally*** developed materials" (Ciolek 1997). As Reid (2003) and many others have noted, they cannot compete with pay sites in terms of records, so services should concentrate, where at all

possible, on making the wealth of local-only materials available remotely. In any case, they must highlight the uniqueness of their e-resources and of the local context e-local studies provides, both online and in publicity materials and the press.

- Clarity of description

Evaluative criteria of quality information, both here (5.3) and in the literature, advocate the use of clear understandable language in resources. Clarity is also one of the fundamental things that users want from e-local studies (8.7), in all respects. Standard information, such as opening hours, location, catalogue access and contact details should be clearly displayed; although this would be expected, this was not always the case (Tucker 2006). Watts (2006) considers that descriptions of materials are easier to read as a list, and that a "condensed introduction" would help researchers quickly find the services, information or contact information they required. As section 8.7 discusses, most users will understand the limitations of the service when explained. Practitioners should try to present clear details of the collections and possibility of remote services. Andrews advocates increasing the detail in collection-level descriptions, because it would "improve [websites'] functionality as finding aids and thus increase accessibility". Many authors have found that this can reduce speculative enquiries regarding collection contents; improvements here would be worth the investment of time and resource.

- Local studies gateway or directory

The 'death' of *Familia*, which a number of participants used as an entry point into libraries and local studies, has been big loss to local studies discoverability, the full impact of which was not able to be assessed by this research (the closure occurring after the conclusion of the data collection). e-Local studies suffer from the lack of an online focal point, a central point of access to all LSHPs. A macro-level resource, in the form of a gateway or directory linking directly to LSHPs would simplify and facilitate both discovery and access to e-local studies materials, and make it easier for users to get into these more quickly. This would enable what Andrews (2006) and other authors have recommended in terms of a "joined-up" approach for local studies marketing across the UK, the collective marketing of all LSHPs globally. Users recognised that the consistent problems with variable terminology and navigation are not issues that practitioners can control, and are therefore unlikely to be

addressed at individual authority level. Such a resource could largely alleviate the terminology problems in discovery at least; the wider applicability of these resources will also be more easily demonstrated.

There are various options as to the form such a macro-resource could take. At a minimum level it would provide a directory of LSHPs, or something bigger, such as an adaptation of the plan of Bültmann (2005) for a UK Register of Digital Surrogates. Reid and Macafee (2007) suggest a portal, or union catalogue, to enable users to interrogate multiple local studies sites simultaneously. However, problems with differing cataloguing systems, and funding, suggest that it will be some time, if at all, before this can be realised. Pilmer (2011) suggests such a resource might piggyback on an existing project, but this may dilute some of the re-established identity the resource would bring. There are also many intermediate possibilities; e.g. the inclusion of, or having specific reference to, family history materials (*Familia 2.0?).* However, even if it is 'only' a directory, dealing only with local studies materials, it would go a long long way to improving the current situation. Users are more likely to both locate and return there, as the coverage and potential audience of this resource is deeper than that of a single site. Whichever is chosen, a plan for sustainability must be built into its creation, to ensure collective access for years to come.

There is much scope for future research explorations of family historian research behaviour; including testing (and possible further development) of model, and investigating the influence of the nature and shape of resources on information behaviour. Comparative studies could focus specifically on the effects of research and internet experience on the application of strategies within family history research. Other investigations could test the applicability of the model to both local history researchers, and those working with online archival materials. Further work could also be done investigating issues around the online presences of e-local studies. Comparative case studies could be made of local studies or library website operations (both within and outside Local Authority control), examining policies and relationships, to suggest ways to improve working practices. Additionally, formative evaluation research could take place around the development of a national e-Local Studies directory.

These recommendations, in particular the directory, will help provide an online focus for local studies; increasing the visibility of e-local studies and promoting active online engagement with family historians. This user group were not only highly committed, information literate and focused in their research, but also extremely enthusiastic and engaged with the present research at every stage. The initial survey received nearly 4000 responses, and many more respondents volunteered for the diaries, shadowing and focus group studies than were required[306]. Their engagement and commitment to these (often) time-consuming exercises was one factor that made data collection so successful. Participants were also highly responsive to e-local studies content where encountered and examined, indicating that a large potential audience can benefit from access to these materials.

As suggested above (10.2), the most important outputs from this research are the evaluative criteria for e-family history resources, taxonomy of family historians' online research behaviour, and considerations of e-local studies from practitioners, users and nonusers. It is hoped that practitioners can use these perspectives to continue to make e-local studies materials visible and relevant, and provide what users of e-local studies sites really want, namely clarity of available services, and unique local electronic resources; the kind of unique and context-rich materials that local studies are best placed to offer, and which can make a real impact on family history research.

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[306] One potential focus group member was terribly apologetic about having to pull out following emergency surgery!

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LIST OF APPENDICES

A	genealog* family history family historian*	Retrieved literature for both Resources and Users
B	"local studies" "local history" "community history" public library* AND web (collection OR library) AND (promotion OR marketing)	Local Studies Within LIS-centred sources (e.g. LISA), the bodies of literature to be searched (both specific and borrowed) were not extensive enough for single terms/phrases from A or B to require further qualification. More specificity was required within more general sources.
C	evaluat* (AND criteria)	
D	information AND seeking "real world" AND information AND seeking	Depending on volume of literature retrieved from a particular source, qualified with A.
E	"information literacy" "digital literacy" "web literacy" "real world literacy"	
F	(online OR web OR Internet) AND (survey OR questionnaire) diar* shadowing OR observation focus group benchmark*	Retrieved literature for purposes of research design

This statement is intended to provide reassurance and increase participant confidence with regard to the ethical principles which lie behind the "Researching e-Genealogy" project. All aspects of the research will be conducted with fairness, integrity and professionalism, in accordance with the Robert Gordon University's Research Ethics Policy, and has been approved by the University's Research Ethics Sub-committee.

Family history searchers have a lot at stake in their research. It is personal. It is family. It is their heritage and may influence their future. (Davidsson, 2004)

This investigation deals with participants' approaches to researching their private and personal history, sensitivity to this will be maintained throughout its duration. The research team wish to emphasise that:

- The interests of the investigation lie with the search process undertaken by any participant, and NOT specifically with the precise "genealogical fact" or "result" uncovered;

- These "results" are only of interest in so far as they become "a piece in the puzzle" or instigate another stage in the search process;

- Any potentially sensitive "result" or fact revealed by a participant, whether from the past or present, will be seen by the principal investigator only.

Sensitive Data

Only data that is necessary for the research will be requested from participants. Because of the nature of the research, your involvement may involve disclosure (to the principal investigator ONLY) of potentially sensitive information. Participants can be assured that this will not have any prejudicial effect on the research. Anything that is revealed will, without exception, remain confidential.

Anonymity

Participants can be assured that will remain anonymous. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym or codename, and will traceable through the study by this codename only.

Data Storage

All data will be stored securely in either a locked file (paper), or on a password protected server (electronic). This will be referenced by codename only. Any contact details provided by participants will also be stored securely, separately from the collected data. A reference file, the only document showing the links between codenames and contact details, will be stored securely in an independent location.

Informed Consent

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. Before you take part in any stage of the research, you will be informed of the nature of the research and exactly what your participation will involve, in terms of:

Your likely time commitment,

What data will be collected,

How the data will be stored, and used within the research.

You will then be asked to sign (or complete electronically) a form, confirming your consent of your involvement before any data collection will commence.

Withdrawal from the Research

Although we are not strictly concerned with the results found, the research team are aware that they have the potential to affect participation and attitudes towards the research. Participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Because of the staged nature of data collection and ongoing analysis, if a participant withdraws from the project, any data already submitted by that participant will remain in the data set for analysis. Of course, in exceptional circumstances, every effort will be made to extract the data.

Academic Conduct

The analysis of collected data, and investigation of literature and resources, will be performed in a balanced and objective manner. Fair representation will be observed in the assessment of library resources: any criticism given will be constructive, as the goal of the research is not to "name and shame", but to highlight and promote good practice.

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About You

Q1: Are you: *Male; Female*

Q2: Which one of these age groups do you fall into?

   Under 16; 16-24; 25-34; 35-44; 45-54; 55-64; 65-74; 75 or over

Q3: Which of these best describes your marital status?

   Single; Long-term Partner; Married; Separated/Divorced; Widowed

Q4: How many children do you have?

   None; 1; 2; 3; 4; 5 or more

Q5: How many grandchildren do you have?

   None; 1-3; 4-6; 7-9; 10 or more

Q6: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

   School (e.g. A-level, Higher, High School Diploma); Undergraduate Degree; Professional Qualification; Postgraduate Degree; Higher Degree

Q7: Which of these best describes your current employment status?

   Full-time; Part-time; Not Working; Full-time Student; Retired; Other

Q8: Do you have connections with one of the following religions?

   None; Baptist; Church in Wales; Church of England; Church of Ireland; Church of Scotland; Episcopal; Hinduism; Islam; Judaism; Methodist; Religious Society of Friends (Quakers); Roman Catholic; Salvation Army; Sikhism; Other Christian; Other; Prefer not to say

Where You Are

Q9: Where do you currently live?

United Kingdom; United States; Canada; Australia; New Zealand**************
Afghanistan; Akrotiri; Albania; Algeria; American Samoa; Andorra; Angola; Anguilla;
Antarctica; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Armenia; Aruba; Ashmore and Cartier
Islands; Austria; Azerbaijan; Bahamas, The; Bahrain; Baker Island; Bangladesh; Barbados;
Bassas da India; Belarus; Belgium; Belize; Benin; Bermuda; Bhutan; Bolivia; Bosnia and
Herzegovina; Botswana; Bouvet Island; Brazil; British Virgin Islands; Brunei; Bulgaria;
Burkina Faso; Burma; Burundi; Cambodia; Cameroon; Cape Verde; Cayman Islands;
Central African Republic; Chad; Chile; China; Christmas Island; Clipperton Island; Cocos
(Keeling) Islands; Colombia; Comoros; Congo, Democratic Republic of the; Congo,
Republic of the; Cook Islands; Coral Sea Islands; Costa Rica; Cote d'Ivoire; Croatia; Cuba;
Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Dhekelia; Djibouti; Dominica; Dominican Republic;
East Timor; Ecuador; Egypt; El Salvador; Equatorial Guinea; Eritrea; Estonia; Ethiopia;
Europa Island; Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas); Faroe Islands; Fiji; Finland; France;
French Guiana; French Polynesia; French Southern and Antarctic Lands; Gabon; Gambia,
The; Gaza Strip; Georgia; Germany; Ghana; Gibraltar; Glorioso Islands; Greece;
Greenland; Grenada; Guadeloupe; Guam; Guatemala; Guinea; Guinea-Bissau; Guyana;
Haiti; Heard Island and McDonald Islands; Holy See (Vatican City); Honduras; Hong
Kong; Howland Island; Hungary; Iceland; India; Indonesia; Iran; Iraq; Ireland; Israel;
Italy; Jamaica; Jan Mayen; Japan; Jarvis Island; Johnston Atoll; Jordan; Juan de Nova
Island; Kazakhstan; Kenya; Kingman Reef; Kiribati; Korea, North; Korea, South; Kuwait;
Kyrgyzstan; Laos; Latvia; Lebanon; Lesotho; Liberia; Libya; Liechtenstein; Lithuania;
Luxembourg; Macau; Macedonia; Madagascar; Malawi; Malaysia; Maldives; Mali; Malta;
Marshall Islands; Martinique; Mauritania; Mauritius; Mayotte; Mexico; Micronesia,
Federated States of; Midway Islands; Moldova; Monaco; Mongolia; Montserrat; Morocco;
Mozambique; Namibia; Nauru; Navassa Island; Nepal; Netherlands; Netherlands Antilles;
New Caledonia; Nicaragua; Niger; Nigeria; Niue; Norfolk Island; Northern Mariana
Islands; Norway; Oman; Pakistan; Palau; Palmyra Atoll; Panama; Papua New Guinea;
Paracel Islands; Paraguay; Peru; Philippines; Pitcairn Islands; Poland; Portugal; Puerto
Rico; Qatar; Reunion; Romania; Russia; Rwanda; Saint Helena; Saint Kitts and Nevis;
Saint Lucia; Saint Pierre and Miquelon; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Samoa; San
Marino; Sao Tome and Principe; Saudi Arabia; Senegal; Serbia and Montenegro;
Seychelles; Sierra Leone; Singapore; Slovakia; Slovenia; Solomon Islands; Somalia; South
Africa; South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; Spain; Spratly Islands; Sri Lanka;
Sudan; Suriname; Svalbard; Swaziland; Sweden; Switzerland; Syria; Tajikistan; Tanzania;
Thailand; Togo; Tokelau; Tonga; Trinidad and Tobago; Tromelin Island; Tunisia; Turkey;
Turkmenistan; Turks and Caicos Islands; Tuvalu; Uganda; Ukraine; United Arab
Emirates; Uruguay; Uzbekistan; Vanuatu; Venezuela; Vietnam; Virgin Islands; Wake
Island; Wallis and Futuna; West Bank; Western Sahara; Yemen; Zambia; Zimbabwe;
Taiwan; Isle of Man; Channel Islands

Q10: If you currently live within the United Kingdom, what is your postcode?

Q11: If you currently live outside the United Kingdom, have you previously lived in the UK? (please tick all that apply)

I have never lived in the UK; Channel Islands/Isle of Man; England; Northern Ireland; Scotland; Wales ;

Your Research

Q12: What is your experience of family history research?

Beginner; Less than 1 year; 1- 4 years; 5-10 years; More than 10 years; Professional

Q13: Are you a member of a Family History or genealogical society?

Yes; No

Q14: Are you a member of your local public library?

Yes; No

Q15: Which countries within the United Kingdom are you currently researching? (please tick all that apply)

Channel Islands/Isle of Man; England; Northern Ireland; Scotland; Wales;

Your Computer and Internet Experience

Q16: How long have you used a computer?

Less than 6 months; 6 months - 1 year; 1 - 3 years; 3 - 5 years; More than 5 years

Q17: How would you assess your computer skill level?

Novice; Intermediate; Advanced   ;

Q18: How long have you used the Internet?

Less than 6 months; 6 months - 1 year; 1 - 3 years; 3 - 5 years; More than 5 years   ;

Q19: How would you assess your Internet skill level?;

Novice; Intermediate; Advanced   ;

Q20: How much do you use a computer/the Internet at work?

Not at all; Once or twice a week; Once or twice a day; Up to half of each day; More than half of each day   ;

Q21: How long have you been using electronic resources in your family history research?

Less than 6 months; 6 months - 1 year; 1 - 3 years; More than 3 years

Q22: Where is the main Internet connection that you use for your genealogical research?

Home; Work; Home and Work; Library; Other

Q23: What is the speed of this Internet connection?

Dial-up: Less than 56Kbps; Dial-up: 56Kbps; Broadband: 512Kbps; Broadband: 1Mbps or greater; LAN (Local Area Network); Other; Unsure

Q24: Apart from at home or work (or your main place of use), do you use the Internet for your research anywhere else?

Family member's home; FHS library; Public library; Other library; Other; I only use my main Internet connection   ;

And Finally...

Q25: Would you consider participating further in this research at a later date? (You will not be committed to the project at this stage);

Yes; Maybe; No

If yes (or maybe), or you would like to be informed of the results of this survey, please enter your email address:

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

Important Information

Survey: Users of e-Genealogical Resources

The Researching e-Genealogy research team are committed to providing anyone taking part in the research with comprehensive relevant information about their participation. All aspects of the research will be conducted with fairness, integrity and professionalism, in accordance with the Robert Gordon University's Research Ethics Policy, and has been approved by the Robert Gordon University's Research Ethics Sub-committee.

The Survey

This survey is open to anyone who has used the Internet as part of their genealogical or family history research. It is the first stage of data collection for the Researching e-Genealogy project, and the results will be used to build a demographic profile of those using these electronic resources.

Time Commitment

The survey will take around 5 minutes to complete. Although you are asked for an indication of your willingness to take part in the later stages of the project, completion of this survey does not commit you to any further participation.

Sensitive Data

Only data that is necessary for the research has been requested. All data submitted will, without exception, remain confidential.

Anonymity and Data Storage

All participants can be assured that they will remain anonymous. All data will be stored securely on a password protected server (electronic). Any email addresses submitted by participants will also be stored securely and separately from the collected data.

Further information

If, before completing the survey, you have any other questions or concerns that have not been addressed on this information page or elsewhere on the Researching e-Genealogy site, please use the contact form or email prs.friday@rgu.ac.uk.

Participant Declaration

I have read and understood the above information, and give my informed consent to take part in this survey. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that completing this survey does not commit me to any further participation in this research.

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┌─────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────┐
│   surveyintro.htm   │  ═══▶   │    survey_pa.htm    │
└─────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────┘
                                           │
        New Window                         ▼
                                   ╱───────────────╲
                                  ╱ Has participant  ╲
                                 ╱     completed       ╲
                                 ╲    declaration?     ╱
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                              Yes ╱                 ╲ No
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                    ┌──────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │    survey.htm    │    │      RELOAD      │
                    └──────────────────┘    └──────────────────┘
                             │
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                    └──────────────────────┘
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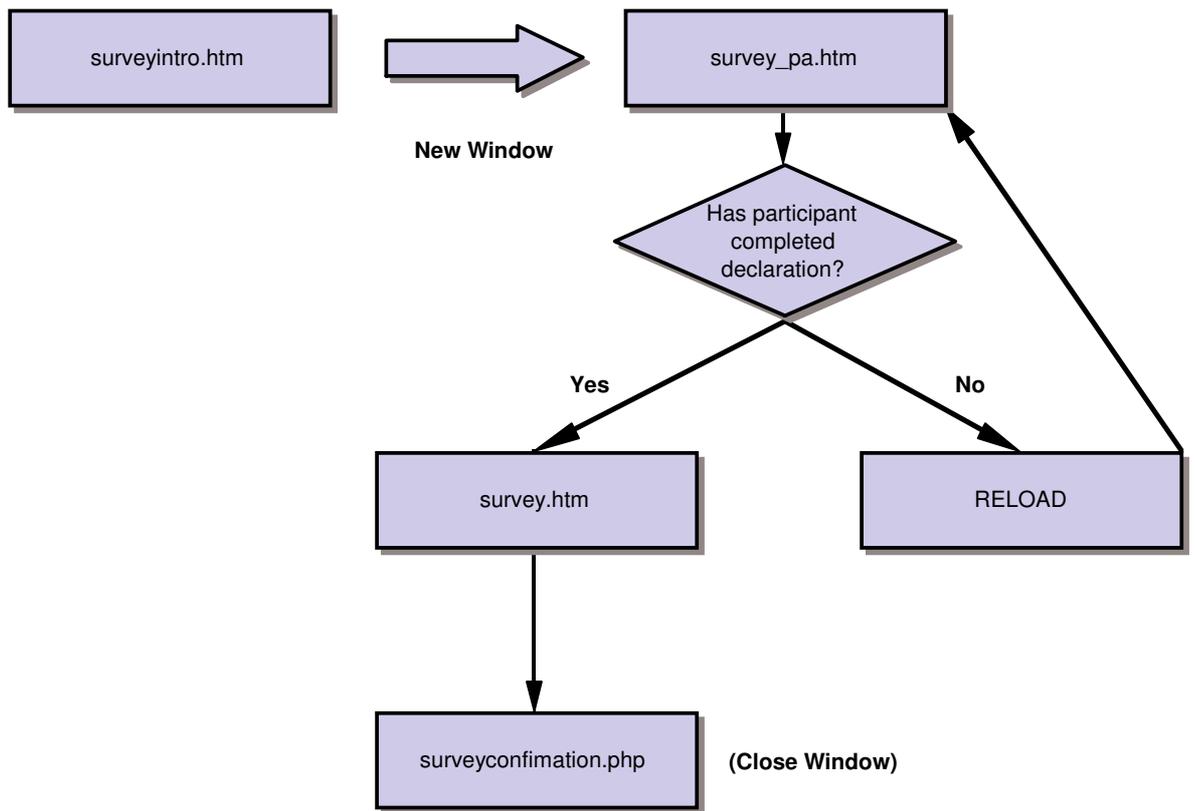
Researching your family tree? RGU wants to hear from you.

Tracking down the ancestors on the Internet has become a major past-time for families all around the World. Indeed e-genealogy is now the second biggest use of the Internet.

The explosion in interest in family history has been fuelled by the increasing range of electronic resources, including those provided Local Studies Library Collections. However, these are rarely as visible on the Internet as commercial or government sites.

Kate Friday, a researcher at The Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, is investigating the genealogical material available on the web and how it is being used to research family history.   As part of her work she is looking for anyone who has investigated their family tree on the Internet to share their experiences by completing a 5-minute on-line survey.

Kate said, "The remarkable growth and development of the Internet has made our pasts quick and simple to research, and more and more information is continually becoming available online. Through my research I want to build up a profile of who is using which on-line services and how they are using them. I also want to promote local studies libraries within the online research community as they frequently hold far more information on how our ancestors lived."

Dr Nick Barratt, the genealogist on BBC's "Who Do You Think You Are?", is acting as an advisor to Kate's research project.

Kate's online survey can be found at www.researchingegenealogy.co.uk.

Note to Editors

The web address is an integral part of this story and should be included in any article.

Kate Friday can be contacted for further information on xxxx xxx xxxx, or at prs.friday@rgu.ac.uk.

Dear Journal Editor

I am a PhD student at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, and I wish to submit a short news piece concerning my research that I very much hope will be of interest to your members. I would be very grateful if you could include it in the next issue of your society's journal.

I very much look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at prs.friday@rgu.ac.uk.

Best regards,

Kate Friday

Online Survey aims to Research e-Genealogy

Following the recent growth in interest in genealogy, a researcher at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, has recently launched an online survey as the first stage of the project investigating Internet use for family history research.

This is a call for as many people as possible to roll on up at fill it in. The survey is open to anyone using UK Internet information sources as part of their genealogical or family history research. From the responses it is hoped to build a clearer picture of the users of these resources.

The survey is Available from http://www.researchingegenealogy.co.uk, and should take about 5 minutes to complete.

For further details on the survey or any aspect of the research, please contact Kate Friday at
prs.friday@rgu.ac.uk.

Appendix 8: Summary of Diary Responses

Diarist	Country	Gender	Age Bracket	Age	Genealogical Experience	Sessions Completed
D01	UK	Female	45-54	54	5-10 Years	8
D02	UK	Female	35-44	42	Over 10 Years	4
D03	UK	Male	55-64	60	Over 10 Years	8
D04	UK	Male	55-64	55	5-10 Years	0
D05	Canada	Male	65-74	68	1-4 Years	1
D06	Netherlands	Female	55-64	n/a	1-4 Years	8
D07	USA	Female	65-74	66	1-4 Years	8
D08	UK	Female	45-54	46	Over 10 Years	8
D09	UK	Female	55-64	65	Under 1 Year	8
D10	UK	Male	55-64	62	Under 1 Year	1
D11	USA	Female	45-54	49	5-10 Years	8
D12	USA	Male	45-54	50	5-10 Years	8
D13	UK	Female	45-54	50	5-10 Years	0
D14	Canada	Female	55-64	62	Over 10 Years	6
D15	UK	Female	45-54	47	5-10 Years	0
D16	Canada	Female	55-64	59	1-4 Years	8
D17	Canada	Male	75-84	83	Over 10 Years	4
D18	New Zealand	Female	55-64		1-4 Years	0
D19	Australia	Female	35-44	40	5-10 Years	6
D20	Australia	Female	65-74	70	1-4 Years	8
D21	UK	Male	45-54	47	Over 10 Years	0
D22	Australia	Male	45-54	46	1-4 Years	8
D23	UK	Female	45-54	49	Over 10 Years	7
D24	UK	Male	55-64	65	1-4 Years	1
D25	UK	Male	65-74	67	Under 1 Year	0
D26	UK	Female	25-34	29	Under 1 Year	1
D27	UK	Female	35-44	40	Under 1 Year	8
D28	UK	Male	25-34	34	1-4 Years	1
D29	UK	Male	45-54	45	Under 1 Year	0
D30	UK	Female	55-64	64	1-4 Years	8

Summary of Diary Respondents

Appendix 9: Focus Group Schedule

Part 1: General Internet

What would you say were your favourite websites for family history research?

Are there any other sites consider "core" to your online research?

How many sites do you tend to use in the "core" group

Why do you keep using these sites? What keeps drawing you back to those particular sites?

How do you find new sites? (Loyalty, brand awareness, trust, attraction to particular site)

How do you navigate to sites?

How much do you use Google?

How much do you think a URL or a web address can tell you about a site? How much can it tell you about where you are on a site? How useful do you find it?

If there are various sources of a piece of information, how do you decide which source to use?

How willing are you to pay for information?

What things do you think are important when assessing the quality and reliability of a website?

How much do you consider the provider of information in your assessment?

General likes and dislikes about things like: site designs; functionality; usability; feelings about: Ancestry (.co.uk/.com), Find My Past, Origins, ScotlandsPeople, FamilySearch, National Archives, National Archives of Scotland, Genes Reunited, RootsWeb?, Message boards. These are suggested sites – but please feel free to bring up any others you would like to discuss.

Part 2: Local Studies

Before your involvement with this project, how aware were you of Local Studies Collections? Awareness of Websites? Would you have considered looking at a Local Studies Website as an information source? (If you have, how did you find out about them?)

In the site assessments, what did you expect to find? How did that compare to what you did find?

Site assessments - please think about: your impressions and opinions of the sites; the information they present about the physical collection; information you can read/search online.

Are you finding anything potentially useful?; Was it easy to find?; Was the site laid out logically?; Did you find what you expected?; How helpful is the site for a remote user (i.e. someone that cannot physically go and visit the collection)?; How well does the site link to other relevant sections of the council website, and to other related websites?; How easy is it to move around? ; Is the information presented in a suitable way? What were the most useful electronic resources you found provided by LS?

What did you like? What didn't you like? What do you want to see?

What would you consider a minimum level of service?

What would you consider exceptional?

Is there any element evident in general genealogy sites that you think would improve Local studies? Would you use in the future? Why/why not?

Service Details	Local Studies URL; Library URL; Service Name; Relationship of Service to Libraries Local Studies (was this within Libraries?); Clicks from Lib Home; Route; Was scrolling required to locate any of the links in the route?; Terminology used.
Google Rankings[307]	Google Search Ranking of: x Local Studies; x Local History; x Family History; x Genealogy
OPAC	Was an OPAC available?; (Catalogue software used); Collection Coverage;
Contact Information and Opening Hours	Local Studies Address, email, phone, opening hours; Contact name; Position/ease of locating Contact Information.
Site Features	Presence of :A-Z; Site Map; Search; Home link; Breadcrumb Trail; Text version. Appropriate use of: Fonts/Colours; Images, White space. Acceptable Scrolling
Accessibility and Metadata	Website accessibility ratings; Metadata schemes used; Use of appropriate descriptors
Site Operation	Typical File Extensions; Appropriate: Loading speed; Language; length of text; Ease/Position(s) of Navigation; Logical presentation; Broken Links; Last updated
Provision of Databases	Access to: Ancestry Library Edition; Other Subscription Databases
Local Studies Online Content	Collection Specificity. e-LS content (internal/external/content contributed elsewhere); Relevant external collaborations.
Links	Links provided to: Other Libraries/Archives; Family History sites; International Sites; Other relevant LA areas; Link provider
Guidance leaflets	Provision of guidance to: Physical collection; Online materials; User instruction materials
Enquiry/Research Services	Evidence of: Enquiry/ reference service (by email, online form, phone); Research service (own, elsewhere in LA; Researcher/FHS directory; Statement of: Photocopy/reproduction policy; Access restrictions.
Promotional Features	Evidence of: Newsletter; Events Calendar/Listings; Use of Blogs, SN, or other Web 2.0 applications; Other Promotional features.
Other Features	

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[307] For each site, Google searches were performed on the LA name with a number of related terms. For example: Aberdeen Local Studies. These searches were also performed on pre-1974 counties.

Appendix 11: Local Studies Interview Schedule

<u>Local Studies</u>

- Where does the Local Studies service sit within the structure of your organisation, particularly in relation to Library, Archives and Records services?

- To what extent do you feel that Local Studies has its own identity within the larger Library/Archive service? What do you see as the main issues arising from this?

<u>Family Historians</u>

- What are you Impressions/ experiences of Family Historians? Have you noticed any evidence of the Family History Boom within your service? What do you think are the reasons behind the boom?

- What do you feel is the role of Local Studies role (in terms of Family Historians) in assisting: (a) Local and (b) Remote users?

- Have you noticed changes in the expectations of Family Historians using your service?

- What statistics do you collect for Family History enquires? Have you seen any changes in terms of Local / Remote use in your service? How do these statistics complement "the whole picture" of your library/archive service?

<u>Your Web site</u>

- How important do you feel your website is to your service?

- What do you see as the role of e-Local Studies (in terms of Family Historians) in assisting: (a) Local and (b) Remote users?

- What input does your service (both in terms of the overall Library/Archive service and Local Studies) have into the design and structure of your pages?

- How often is it updated?

- How do you feel your site / e-resource has developed in the last 3 years? How would you like to develop it?

- What do you think is (a) desirable; (b) realistic, in terms of both services to remote users, and e-LS future development?

- What do you feel is the best feature of your site?

- Which online databases do your service make available for users?

- Do you know what statistics are collected in relation to your web site?

- What barriers do you see to the future development of your website?

- What measures do you use to promote your service?

- Does your service use any Web 2.0 tools (for example social networks, RSS feeds, blogs) as promotional tools? Do you see any use for these technologies in the future?

- What do you consider are features of a good or excellent Local Studies or Local History Heritage site? (This can be in terms of individual elements of a site, an example of a site you consider exemplary, or both.)

- What are your views on e-Family History sites and the information available on the Internet (both subscription and non-subscription)?

- Are there any issues in the area that you would like to highlight further, that you feel either do not get enough attention, or desperately need addressed?

Aberdeen City;

Bolton;

Bournemouth;

Derbyshire;

Devon;

Ealing;

East Riding;

Glasgow;

Herefordshire;

Highland;

Isle of Wight;

Lambeth;

St Helens;

Codename	Service Name	Section of Local Authority	Within Libraries?	Type
LS1	Local Studies Collection		No	English Unitary
LS2	Archives			Scottish Unitary
LS3	Archives and Local Studies	Heritage	Yes	English Unitary
LS4	Archives and Special Collections	Information Services, Libraries and Community Venues [Culture and Sport]	Yes	Scottish Unitary
LS5	Local Studies	LIS, Cultural Services	Yes	London Borough
LS6	Local Studies		Yes	Two-tier non-metropolitan counties
LS7	Local Studies	Libraries, Culture and Community Services	Yes?	Two-tier non-metropolitan counties
LS8	Heritage	Libraries	Yes	English Unitary
LS9:	Archives and Local Studies	Museum and Archive Collections	No	Metropolitan district
LS10	Local Studies	Information Services, [LA] Libraries, Culture and Learning	Yes	Scottish Unitary
LS11	Archives		Yes	London Borough
LS12	Local History and Archives	Libraries	Yes	Metropolitan district
LS13	Archives and Local Studies	Libraries, Museums and Arts	Yes	English Unitary

Local Studies	General Comments	
	Public Awareness	
	Websites	General Website Comments
		Expectations
		Terminology
		Physical Collection Information
		Information searchable online
		Navigation
		Design and Presentation of Info
		Likes
		Dislikes
		External Links
		Internal Links
		Remote Users
		Variations in quality
		LG reorganisation
		Local Authority vs LS issues
	Sources available via LS	
	Attitudes	Trust in LS and Staff
		LS attitudes to Family Historians
		Perceived practitioner enthusiasm
	Interactions with LS Staff	
	What do people want	
	Specific Site Comments	
	Paid Research Services	

Resources	Comments e-sources research general	
	Commercial Information	Advertising CI general willingness CI Special Offers CI Subscription Options
	Com Prov	Com Prov Comm of problems to Com Prov Communications from Com Prov Customer Service General Opinions
	Navigation to Sources	
	New Resource Discovery	
	URLs	
	Internet Issues	
	Hardware etc issues	
	Google/search engines	
	Researcher Source Observations	
	Source Issues	
	Source Development views/Issues	
	Preferences	Favourite Websites Criteria for Site Evaluation Information Quality/Evaluation Likes Dislikes Reasons for Returning Factors affecting perseverance Criteria for Selection

Users: *Research* *Behaviour*	Actions	*Search for Genealogical Facts (names):* Births; Marriages; Deaths; BMDs; Census (Locate; Track (forwards; backwards))
		Search for Local/Social History: Text; Map; Image/Photograph; Place
		Search for Instructive Information
		Locate Sources: Online; Offline
		Contact Source: Order records
		Personal Information Management
		Communicate with Other Researcher
		Research Trip Preparation
		Researching for others
	Strategies	*Combining Sources:* Online (Different sources; multiple versions); with Offline research
		Narrow/Widen Search: Age/Year Ranges; Name Variations; Soundex; Mass retrieval/Batch retrieval; Place Qualifier
		Background knowledge (of family/local history): Naming patterns; Search for people together;
		Source knowledge
		Evaluate and Verify: Revision; Browsing; Check source for new data; Monitor "brickwalls"
	Outcome	*Session Outcome:* Information found; Partial/possible information found; Information not found; Serendipitous information found
		Projected Enquiry Direction: Continue with enquiry (Specific; Non-specific); No further action; Not stated
		Actual Direction: Follow identified steps; Did not follow identified steps; Following previously identified steps; New (tangential?) enquiry

	Researcher Observed Characteristics	Stash information Existing knowledge-assess new sources Personalising places Deductive reasoning What records might people have generated Tangents/ "Lack of awareness" moving btwn sites Lack of confidence-computing ability Not trying/not interested Competitive-sharing info w relatives Sticking to a couple of good sites Toggle sites over long session Lack of awareness-other UK research He could be a relation of mine Look for likely events Speaking to technology Remembering sites/know site not URL

Users: Research	Catalysts: session Catalysts: starting research Descriptions of research Kinds of research/what are they looking for Personal Info Management Relationship with ancestors Research Patterns Thoughts on Family History FH and Media Online/Offline Research Cycle Other researchers/interactions with Researching for others Issues Feelings Findings Feelings Non-finding Comments on direction General Comments Offline Research

Appendix 14: Postcode distribution of UK-based survey respondents

Postcode Area	Freq.	%
AB (Aberdeen)	133	5.8
EH (Edinburgh)	96	4.2
G (Glasgow)	62	2.7
SO (Southampton)	56	2.5
KA (Kilmarnock)	49	2.2
BN (Brighton)	48	2.1
BS (Bristol)	45	2.0
GL (Gloucester)	41	1.8
PO (Portsmouth)	41	1.8
IP (Ipswich)	38	1.7
NE (Newcastle Upon Tyne)	37	1.6
NG (Nottingham)	37	1.6
KY (Kirkcaldy)	36	1.6
GU (Guilford)	34	1.5
IV (Inverness)	34	1.5
RG (Reading)	34	1.5
RH (Redhill)	34	1.5
SK (Stockport)	34	1.5
BH (Bournemouth)	32	1.4
B (Birmingham)	28	1.2
CF (Cardiff)	28	1.2
CV (Coventry)	28	1.2
LE (Leicester)	28	1.2
PA (Paisley)	28	1.2
PE (Peterborough)	26	1.1
CB (Cambridge)	25	1.1
FK (Falkirk)	25	1.1
NR (Norwich)	25	1.1
DG (Dumfries)	24	1.1
EX (Exeter)	24	1.1
TN (Tonbridge)	24	1.1
CH (Chester)	22	1.0
SN (Swindon)	22	1.0
BA (Bath)	21	0.9
SE (London)	21	0.9
DD (Dundee)	20	0.9
DN (Doncaster)	20	0.9
HP (Hemel Hempstead)	20	0.9
LL (Llandudno)	20	0.9
OX (Oxford)	20	0.9
S (Sheffield)	20	0.9
NN (Northampton)	19	0.8
PH (Perth)	19	0.8
PL (Plymouth)	19	0.8
BR (Bromley)	18	0.8
M (Manchester)	18	0.8
BB (Blackburn)	17	0.7

Postcode Area	Freq.	%
BT (Belfast)	17	0.7
CA (Carlisle)	17	0.7
WA (Warrington)	17	0.7
WR (Worcester)	17	0.7
KT (Kingston Upon Thames)	16	0.7
PR (Preston)	16	0.7
TW (Twickenham)	16	0.7
DE (Derby)	15	0.7
ML (Motherwell)	15	0.7
SA (Swansea)	15	0.7
YO (York)	15	0.7
CM (Chelmsford)	14	0.6
DT (Dorchester)	14	0.6
KW (Kirkwall)	14	0.6
L (Liverpool)	14	0.6
LA (Lancaster)	14	0.6
LS (Leeds)	14	0.6
ME (Medway)	14	0.6
TA (Taunton)	14	0.6
CO (Colchester)	13	0.6
CT (Canterbury)	13	0.6
OL (Oldham)	13	0.6
SG (Stevenage)	13	0.6
SW (London)	13	0.6
TS (Cleveland)	13	0.6
WF (Wakefield)	13	0.6
BL (Bolton)	12	0.5
MK (Milton Keynes)	12	0.5
RM (Romford)	12	0.5
TQ (Torquay)	12	0.5
BD (Bradford)	11	0.5
CW (Crewe)	11	0.5
SP (Salisbury)	11	0.5
SY (Shrewsbury)	11	0.5
TD (Galashiels)	11	0.5
TR (Truro)	11	0.5
ST (Stoke-on-Trent)	10	0.4
W (London)	10	0.4
DA (Dartford)	9	0.4
DH (Durham)	9	0.4
HD (Huddersfield)	9	0.4
NP (Newport)	9	0.4
AL (St Albans)	8	0.4
DY (Dudley)	8	0.4
E (London)	8	0.4
LN (Lincoln)	8	0.4
LU (Luton)	8	0.4

Postcode Area	Freq.	%		Postcode Area	Freq.	%
SL (Slough)	8	0.4		CR (Croydon)	5	0.2
SS (Southend-on-Sea)	8	0.4		HA (Harrow)	4	0.2
WV (Wolverhampton)	8	0.4		HX (Halifax)	4	0.2
DL (Darlington)	7	0.3		HG (Harrogate)	3	0.1
FY (Blackpool)	7	0.3		LD (Llandridod Wells)	3	0.1
HR (Hereford)	7	0.3		N (London)	3	0.1
NW (London)	7	0.3		SR (Sunderland)	3	0.1
TF (Telford)	7	0.3		WS (Walsall)	3	0.1
EN (Enfield)	6	0.3		ZE (Shetland)	3	0.1
HU (Hull)	6	0.3		HS (Western Isles)	2	0.1
SM (Sutton)	6	0.3		IG (Ilford)	2	0.1
UB (Uxbridge)	6	0.3		IM (Isle of Man)	2	0.1
WD (Watford)	6	0.3		JE (Jersey)	2	0.1
WN (Wigan)	6	0.3		EC (London)	1	0.0

These websites were current at the time of data collection (2006/2007); this may not be the case at the current time.

Diaries

1901 Census: www.1901census.nationalarchives.gov.uk

A2A: www.a2a.org.uk

Aberdeen University: www.abdn.ac.uk

About.com: www.about.com [genealogy; historymedren]

Adbaston Village: www.geocities.com/ptrue84020/villages.html

Alta Vista: www.altavista.com

Am Baile: www.ambaile.org.uk

AC Hull Family: www.achullfamily.org/genealogy/

Amazon: www.amazon.xxx

Ancestors on Board: www.ancestorsonboard.com

Ancestral Scotland: www.ancestralscotland.com

Ancestry: www.ancestry.xxx

Answers.com: www.answers.com

Ardrossan Academy: www.ardacad.co.uk

AUS-Tasmanian Genealogy Mailing List: www.rootsweb.com/~austashs/

Australian War Memorial: www.awm.gov.au

Barnes and Noble: www.barnesandnoble.com

BBC Family History: www.bbc.co.uk/history/familyhistory

BC Archives - Royal BC Museum: www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca

Beckham Books: www.beckhambooks.co.uk

Birmingham and Midland Society for Genealogy and Heraldry (BMDs):
www.bmsgh.org/staffsbmd/index.html

Black Sheep Index: www.lightage.demon.co.uk/index.htm

BMD Share: www.bmdshare.com

Bogstown: www.laird-bogston.com

Borthwick Institute for Archives: www.york.ac.uk/inst/bihr

Brant Country, Ontario: www.rootsweb.com/~onbrant

Brantford Library: www.brantford.library.on.ca

British Ancestors in India: members.ozemail.com.au/~clday/

British History: www.british-history.ac.uk

Buckland Cemetery: usus.tpg.com.au/users/omeo/Buckland

Buildings of Hinckley: www.hinckley.netfirms.com

Canadian Genealogy and History Links: www.island.com/~jveinot/cghl.html

Cemetery Records Online: www.interment.net

Church of England: www.cofe.anglican.org

City of Chicago: www.cityofchicago.org

City of London Council: www.cityoflondon.gov.uk

Clan Campbell Society (North America): www.ccsna.org

Clydebridge Steel Works History: myweb.tiscali.co.uk/clydebridge

Commonwealth War Graves Commission: www.cwgc.org

CSAC Clan Sinclair Association Canada: www.clansinclaircanada.ca

Cyndi's List: www.cyndislist.com

Department of Justice: www.online.justice.vic.gov.au

Dinnie World: www.gordondinnie.com

Dogpile: www.dogpile.com

Durham Miner: gis.durham.gov.uk/website/miner/

Durham Mining Museum: www.dmm.org.uk/

eBay: www.ebay.xxx

Ebelthite Family: ebelthite.feis.herts.ac.uk

Electric Scotland: www.electricscotland.com

Ellis Island Records: www.ellisislandrecords.org

Ellis Island: www.ellisisland.org

Family History Online: www.familyhistoryonline.net/

Family Trees Online: www.familytreesonline.com

FamilySearch: www.familysearch.org

Fashion-Era: www.fashion-era.com

Federation of Family History Societies: www.ffhs.org

Ferdinand and Ferdinando Surname Family History Site: www.ferdinando.org.uk/

Finding Families Group: groups.yahoo.com/group/findingfamilies

FindMyPast: www.findmypast.com

ForGenerations: familypedigree.com

FreeBMD: www.freebmd.org.uk

FreeCEN: www.freecen.org.uk

FreeREG: www.freereg.rootsweb.com

Friends Reunited: www.friendsreunited.com

From Roots to Nuts: home.earthlink.net/~chrisgosnell

Galloping Fox: www.zipworld.com.au/~lnbdds

Gazettes Online: www.gazettes-online.co.uk

Gen Circles: www.gencircles.com

Gen Forum: www.genforum.genealogy.com

Genealogy Links: www.genealogylinks.net

General Register Office: www.gro.gov.uk

Genes Reunited: www.genesreunited.co.uk

GENEVA: The GENUKI calendar of GENealogical EVents and Activities:
www.geneva.weald.org.uk

Genseek Genealogy and History: www.genseek.net

GENUKI: www.genuki.org.uk

Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum: www.ford.utexas.edu

Google: www.google.xxx

Guildhall: www.corpoflondon.gov.uk/guildhall

Hall Family Genealogy: rmhh.co.uk/

Heraldry Family Names and Coats of Arms: www.surnames.org

High County Heritage: www.highcountryheritage.org.au

Historical Directories: www.historicaldirectories.org

Hugh Wallis: freepages.genealogy.rootsweb/~hughwallis

IGI Batch Numbers: www.freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/
igibatchnumbers.htm

Immigrant Ships: www.immigrantships.net

Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies: www.ihgs.ac.uk

Internet History Sourcebooks - Fordham University: www.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient

Jewish Chronicle: www.thejc.com

Jewish Genealogical Society of Great Britain: www.jgsgb.org.uk

Jewish Genealogy: www.jewishgen.org

Leeds 800th Anniversary Celebrations: www.celebrateleeds07.com

Leeds Civic Trust: www.leedscivictrust.org.uk

Leeds Council: www.leeds.gov.uk (local history and archives)

Leeds Local Index: www.leedslocalindex.net

Library and Archives Canada: www.collectionscanada.ca

Library of Congress: www.loc.gov

Light Infantry: www.lightinfantry.co.uk/

The Long Long Trail: www.1914-1918.net

Mackie Academy: www.mackie.aberdeenshire.sch.uk

Mapquest: www.mapquest.com

Ministry of Defence: www.mod.uk

Motherwell Heritage: www.geocities.com/motherwell heritage

Moving Here: www.movinghere.org.uk

Multimap: www.multimap.co.uk

My Roots Place: www.myrootsplace.com

National Archives of Australia: www.naa.gov.au

National Archives of Ireland: www.nationalarchives.ie/

National Portrait Gallery: www.npg.org.uk

Norfolk Surnames: uk.geocities.com/NorfolkSurnames/

NSW Registry of Births Deaths and Marriages: www.bdm.nsw.gov.au

Old Maps: www.old-maps.co.uk

Ontario Census: ontariocensus.rootsweb.com

Ordnance Survey: www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/

Origins: www.origins.net

Oxfordshire Genealogical Resources: whipple.org/oxford

Pamela Torphichen:
www.bardic-music.com/torphichen.htm

Philip Burman Military Medals: www.military-medals.co.uk

Portbury Hundred: www.portbury-hundred.co.uk

Presbytery of Aberdeen - Congregations: www.presbaberdeen.org.uk/
congregations.htm

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland: www.proni.gov.uk

Quantitative Analysis of Surnames: www.spatial-literacy.org

Rate My Teachers: www.ratemyteachers.co.uk

Red Cross: www.redcross.org.au

Regiments: www.regiments.org

Remains to be Seen: www.remainstobeseen.com

Renfrewshire Council: www.renfrewshire.gov.uk

Roll of Honour: www.roll-of-honour.com

RootsWeb: www.rootsweb.com

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland: www.rcahms.gov.uk

Royal Netherlands Academy Of Arts And Sciences: www.knaw.nl/ecpa

Ryerson Index: www.ryerson.arkangles.com

Sages of Nailsea: myweb.tiscali.co.uk/ian.sage

Scot Roots: www.scotroots.com

Scotland's Family: www.scotlandsfamily.com

ScotlandsPeople: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Scots Family: www.scotsfamily.com

Scots Genealogy Society: www.scotsgenealogy.com

Scots History Online: www.scotshistoryonline.co.uk

Scottish Emigration Database: www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration/

Scottish Genealogical Links: home.golden.net/~cwallace/free

Scottish Jewish Archives: www.sjac.org.uk

Scottish Military History: www.btInternet.com/~jamesmackay/dispatch.htm

Sherri's Genealogy Home Page: www.geneofun.on.ca

Shipwrecks Of Victoria: oceans1.customers.

netspce.net.au/vic_main.html

Skateraw: www.skateraw.com

Skaterow Genealogy: www.enkel.com/skaterow/index.html

Social Security Death Index: ssdi.rootsweb.com

Society of Genealogists: www.sog.org.uk

Somerset Gen Web: www.rootsweb.com/~engsom

St. Clair Research: www.stclairresearch.com

State Records Authority of New South Wales: www.records.nsw.gov.au

Statistical Accounts of Scotland: edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot/

Stirnet: www.stirnet.com/

Strathclyde Police Pipe Band: www.strathpol-pipeband.com

Streetmap: www.streetmap.co.uk

Talking Scot: www.talkingscot.com

The Army: www.army.mod.uk/

The Daguerreian Society: www.daguerre.org

The Glasgow Story: www.theglasgowstory.com

The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust: www.fcmp.com.au

The National Archives: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/

The Peerage: thepeerage.com

The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives: www.presbyterian.ca/archives

The Regimental Warpath 1914 - 1918: www.warpath.orbat.com/

The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment): www.theroyalscots.co.uk

The Scotsman: www.scotsman.com

The Signal Box: www.signalbox.org

The Whitehouse: www.whitehouse.gov

Tintypes: people.maine.com/photo/tintypes

Tutton: www.tutton.org

Tweetybird Genealogy: freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/
~tweetybirdgenealogy/

UK Villages: www.ukvillages.co.uk

Undiscovered Scotland: www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk

United Synagogue - Support Services - Find Your Family: www.unitedsynagogue.org.uk/
support_services/find_your_family

Up My Street: www.upmystreet.com/

Various Family History Societies

Veterans UK: www.veterans-uk.info/

Victorian London: www.victorianlondon.org

Victoriana: www.victoriana.com

Virtual Mitchell: www.mitchelllibrary.org/vitualmitchell

Vision of Britain: www.visionofbritain.org.uk/

Wandsworth Council: www.wandsworth.gov.uk

Warwick District Council: www.warwickdc.gov.uk

Wellcome Trust: www.wellcome.ac.uk

West Country Genealogy: www.westcountrygenealogy.com

West Sussex Council: www.westsussex.gov.uk

Wikipedia: www.wikipedia.org

World War Two Nominal Roll: www.ww2roll.gov.au

WorldCat: www.worldcat.org

WorldConnect: worldconnect.genealogy.rootsweb.com

Yahoo: www.yahoo.com/

Yorkshire BMD: www.yorkshirebmd.org.uk

Yorkshire College: www.yorkshirecollege.co.uk

Yorkshire Heroes: www.hullwebs.com

Yorkshire Parish Registers: www.yorkshireparishregisters.com

Your Total Event: www.yourtotalevent.com

Not Found: www.achieversinternational.org/newsdesk/flights.html; home.primus.com.au; hometown.aol.co.uk; www.abd.online.au.edu; members.aol.com/coigich/CGPN.htm; www.bdm.org; www.ehiong.com; www.genealogy4free.com; www.geocities.com/opcdevon; www.geocities.com/torphichen_sandilands/; www.origin.plus.com/weare; www.saintjohn.org/history/britknight.html; www.rootsweb.com/~nswswps/; www.scotsfind.org

Search Shadowing:

Aberdeen and North East Scotland Family History Society: www.anesfhs.org.uk

Ancestry: www.ancestry.co.uk

BBC WWII Peoples War: www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar

Cumbernauld Roots: http://www.cumberlandroots.co.uk

Doomsday Book: Doomsdaybook.co.uk

Familia: www.familia.org.uk

FamilySearch: www.familysearch.org

FamilySearch: www.familysearch.org

Fife Family History Society: www.ffhs.xxx

Find My Past:

FreeBMD:

FreeCEN: www.freecen.org

General Register Office for Scotland: www.gro-scotland.gov.uk

Genes Reunited: www.genesreunited.co.uk

GenForum: www.genforum.com

GENUKI: www.genuki.

Google: www.google.xxx

National Archives of Scotland: www.nas.gov.uk

National Archives: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

New Gazetteer for Scotland: www.scottish-places.info/

Old Maps: www.old-maps.co.uk

Origins: www.origins.net

RootsWeb: www.rootsweb.ancestry.com

SCAN: www.scan.org.uk

ScotlandsPeople: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

SCRAN: www.scran.ac.uk

Staffordshire Web: www.staffordshire.gov.uk

The Army: army.mod.gov.uk

The Potteries: www.thepotteries.org

Welsh Highland Railway: www.whr.co.uk

Focus Groups

1901 Census: www.1901census.nationalarchives.gov.uk

A2A: www.a2a.org.uk

Aberdeen and North East Scotland Family History Society: www.anesfhs.org.uk

Ancestors on Board: www.ancestorsonboard.com

Ancestry: www.ancestry.xxx

Archives Hub: www.archiveshub.ac.uk

Archives Network Wales: www.archivesnetworkwales.info

Black Sheep Ancestors: http://www.blacksheepancestors.com/

Charles Booth Online Archive: booth.lse.ac.uk

Church of England: www.churchofengland.org

Commonwealth War Graves Commission: www.cwgc.org

Cosford Database: via www.suffolkfhs.co.uk/links.html

Cousin Connect: www.cousinconnect.com

Curious Fox: www.curiousfox.com

Cyndi's List: www.cyndislist.com

Earls Colne History: www.colnevalley.com/earlscolne.php

Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter: blog.eogn.com

Ellis Island: www.ellisisland.org

Excite: www.excite.com

Family History Online: www.familyhistoryonline.net

Family Records Centre: www.familyrecords.gov.uk

Family Records Centre: www.familyrecords.gov.uk

FamilySearch: www.familysearch.org

Find My Past: www.findmypast.co.uk

Foxearth and District Local History Society: www.foxearth.org.uk/

FreeBMD: www.freebmd.org.uk

FreeCEN: www.freecen.org.uk

Gen Circles: www.gencircles.com

General Register Office: www.gro.gov.uk

Genes Reunited: www.genesreunited.co.uk

GENUKI: www.genuki.org.uk

Glenbuchat: www.glenbuchat.co.uk

Google: www.google.xxx

Hampshire Villages: southernlife.org.uk/hampshire_index.htm

Harrogate People and Places: www.harrogatepeopleandplaces.info

Historical Directories: www.historicaldirectories.org

History of Ayrshire Villages: www.ayrshirehistory.com

History of Science Fiction (Glasgow University): Could not be found

Hugh Wallis: freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/
~hughwallis/

Images of England: www.imagesofengland.org.uk

Irish Valuation Office: www.valoff.ie
Kindred Konnections: www.kindredkonnections.com

Lancashire BMD: www.lancashirebmd.org.uk

Libindx: libindx.moray.gov.uk

London Gazette: www.london-gazette.co.uk

Long Long Trail: www.1914-1918.net

Lost Cousins: www.lostcousins.com

National Archives of Scotland: www.nas.gov.uk

National Archives: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

National Library of Scotland: www.nls.uk

National Library of Wales: www.llgc.org.uk

National Monuments Records: www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/archives-and-collections/nmr/

Old Bailey Online: www.oldbaileyonline.org

Old Maps: www.old-maps.co.uk

Origins: www.origins.net

ParishRegister.com: www.parishregister.com

Pathé News: www.britishpathe.com

Portbury Hundred: www.portbury-hundred.co.uk/

Public Record Office: www.pro.gov.uk

Quantitative Analysis of Surnames: www.spatial-literacy.org

Random Acts of Genealogical Kindness: www.raogk.org

RootsChat: www.rootschat.com

RootsWeb Lists: lists.rootsweb.ancestry.com

ScotlandsPeople: www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

Scots Origins: www.scotsorigins.com

Scottish Executive: www.scotland.gov.uk

soc.genealogy Newsgroup: homepages.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~socgen/

Society of Genealogists: www.sog.org.uk

Somerset Parish Registers Online: myweb.tiscali.co.uk/ian.sage/pr_index.htm

Statistical Accounts of Scotland: edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot/

Talking Scot: www.talkingscot.com

The Scotsman: www.scotsman.com
Times Archives: archive.timesonline.co.uk/tol/archive/

UK BMD: www.ukbmd.org.uk

Virtual Mitchell: www.mitchelllibrary.org/vitualmitchell

Wigan World: www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/

Wigtownshire Pages: freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~leighann/

YouTube: www.youtube.com

Appendix 16: Focus Group Members' Favourite Sites

	1st Mentioned	*2nd Mentioned*	*3rd Mentioned*	*4th Mentioned*	*5th Mentioned*	*Others Mentioned*
FA1	Free BMD	Ancestry	Genes Reunited	FamilySearch		
FA2	PRO/NA					Most of others
FA3	ScotlandsPeople	Genes Reunited				
FA4	Ancestry	Genes Reunited	FamilySearch			
FA5	Ancestry	Free BMD	Genes Reunited	A2A		
FB1	ScotlandsPeople	FamilySearch	Rootsweb	LIBINDX	ANESFHS	LLT, Strathdon, Cyndi's List; Ancestry; Free CEN; Google
FB2	ScotlandsPeople					Genes Reunited; FamilySearch; FMP; Talking Scot; Ancestry (Sub); Genes Reunited (Sub);
FB3	ScotlandsPeople	FamilySearch				NLS; FMP; Google
FC1	ScotlandsPeople	Ancestry	Genes Reunited	CWGC		Scots Origins (Pre-ScotlandsPeople); FamilySearch; Ayrshire Villages; Old-Maps;
FC2	Ancestry	Genes Reunited	FamilySearch			Irish Sites; CWGC; Old Bailey; Historical Directories; CofE;
FC3	Ancestry	Genes Reunited	FamilySearch	SOG	RootsWeb	CWGC; Booth Online
FD1	Ancestry	Family History Online	ScotlandsPeople			Free BMD; FreeREG; FamilySearch;
FD2	Ancestry	Free BMD	Genes Reunited			
FE1	FamilySearch	ScotlandsPeople	Ancestry	NA		The Genealogist;
FE2	FamilySearch	ScotlandsPeople	Free BMD	Parishregister.com	Ancestry	
FF1	NA	Ancestry				FMP/AoB; London Gazette; LLT; FamilySearch;
FF2	Ancestry	CWGC	(FamilySearch)			Pathe News;
FF3	Ancestry	Free BMD	Historical Directories			FamilySearch;
FF4	Ancestry	Times Archives				NLW; FamilySearch;
FF5	Ancestry	A2A	Historical Directories			FamilySearch;
FG1	NA	FMP	A2A	Ancestry		Genes Reunited
FG2	FMP	Scots Origins (SP?: "*the official one*")	Origins Network			Ancestry (occasionally); FamilySearch (very rarely);

		gender	Age	Gen
S1	ScotlandsPeople; Ancestry; Google; Mormon Church site; Staffordshire web; National Archives; Free BMD; WHR; FindMyPast	2	5	4
S2	Scotland's People; Famous Scots; Google; National Archives; Fife Family History Society; Old-maps.co.uk; FamilySearch; GENUKI; Ancestry	2	5	2
S3	Scotland's People; Google; Old Maps; Ancesty.com; GENUKI; FreeBMD; Doomsdaybook.co.uk; National Archives; www.nas.gov.uk; http://www.cumberlandroots.co.uk	2	6	2
S4	Genes Reunited; Ancestry.com; Google; Familysearch; English Origins	1	7	3
S5	FamilySearch; Google; ScotlandsPeople; pro.gov.uk/National Archives; Ancestry.com; Genes Reunited; GenForum; RootsWeb; Google; www.thepotteries.org	2	3	3
S6	ScotlandsPeople; National Archives; Ancestry; FreeCen; FamilySearch; Genes Reunited; Rootsweb; www.old-maps.co.uk; FreeBMD.org.uk; www.scran.ac.uk; Genuki; army.mod.gov.uk	2	5	4
S7	FamilySearch; ScotlandsPeople; Findmypast; Ancestry; Google; www.old-maps.co.uk; New Gazetteer for Scotland	2	6	3
S8	Familysearch.org; findmypast.com; freecen; Google; Ancestry; Scotland's People; GROS; Old-maps.co.uk	1	5	1
S9	ScotlandsPeople; Ancestry; Scottish Archive Network; Google; http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~genmaps/; Genuki; old-maps.co.uk; FreeBMD; FMP; WWII Peoples War (BBC)	2	4	2
S10	Google; Scotland's People; ancestry.co.uk; ANESFHS; Familysearch: Custom Search IGI; old-maps.co.uk; FreeBMD; Genes Reunited; FreeCEN	1	6	3
S11	Familysearch.org; Google; National Archives; Ancestry; Scotland's People; Familia; old-maps.co.uk	2	6	2

Appendix 18: Diary Entry Statistics

Session	Location	Date	Time of Day	Duration (minutes)	Gap (days)	No. Sites Used	Average session length (minutes)	Average no. sites used	No. unique sites used
d01_1	1	30/10/2006	5	50	n/a	7	125	4.625	16
d01_2	1	06/11/2006	1	70	7	3			
d01_3	1	04/12/2006	3	130	28	3			
d01_4	1	07/01/2007	4	n/a	28	6			
d01_5	1	22/01/2007		n/a	15	4			
d01_6	1	28/01/2007	2	95	6	4			
d01_7	1	10/02/2007	5	150	13	4			
d01_8	1	07/04/2007	4	255	56	6			
d02_1	1	17/10/2006	3	135	n/a	8	122.5	6	19
d02_2	1	14/11/2006	4	85	28	6			
d02_3	1	26/01/2007	3	160	73	5			
d02_4	1	16/02/2007	4	110	21	5			
d03_1	1	28/10/2006	5	105	n/a	3	110.625	3.875	22
d03_2	1	03/11/2006	5	45	6	3			
d03_3	1	09/11/2006	5	45	6	2			
d03_4	1	17/01/2007	5	210	73	3			
d03_5	1	06/02/2007	5	30	20	3			
d03_6	1	01/04/2007	5	180	54	4			
d03_7	1	03/04/2007	5	90	2	6			
d03_8	1	10/04/2007	5	180	7	7			
d05_1	1	08/11/2006	3	130	n/a	1	130	1	1
d06_1	1	19/11/2006		n/a	n/a	4		6.75	25
d06_2	1	26/11/2006		n/a	7	8			

d06_3	1	01/12/2006		n/a	5	6			
d06_4	1	17/12/2006		n/a	16	10			
d06_5	1	13/01/2007		n/a	27	6			
d06_6	1	24/01/2007		n/a	11	7			
d06_7	1	16/03/2007		n/a	51	5			
d06_8	1	14/04/2007		n/a	28	8			
d07_1	1	04/11/2006	5	30	n/a	3	36.25	2.875	17
d07_2	1	09/11/2006	3	30	5	2			
d07_3	1	04/04/2007	5	20	146	3			
d07_4	3	05/04/2007	5	35	1	1			
d07_5	1	06/04/2007	5	40	1	3			
d07_6	1	07/04/2007	1	60	1	9			
d07_7	1	07/04/2007	3	15	0	1			
d07_8	1	07/04/2007	5	60	0	1			
d08_1	1	21/10/2006	3	60	n/a	3	39.125	2.25	11
d08_2	1	15/11/2006	5	11	25	3			
d08_3	1	17/11/2006	1	5	2	1			
d08_4	1	19/11/2006	3	35	2	1			
d08_5	1	23/11/2006	5	42	4	4			
d08_6	1	31/01/2007	6	150	8	2			
d08_7	1	25/03/2007	5	8	53	3			
d08_8	1	07/04/2007	3	2	13	1			
d09_1	1	22/10/2006	2	75	n/a	3	67.875	2.625	6
d09_2	1	23/10/2006	3	145	1	1			
d09_3	1	15/11/2006	5	60	23	3			
d09_4	1	19/11/2006	5	75	4	4			
d09_5	1	n/a	1	50	n/a	3			
d09_6	1	28/01/2007	3	25	n/a	3			
d09_7	1	30/01/2007	5	53	2	3			
d09_8	1	31/01/2007	5	60	1	1			
d10_1	1	25/10/2006	3	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	2	2

d11_1	0	n/a		80	n/a	1	196.875	4.5	25
d11_2	1	20/01/2007	5	90	n/a	2			
d11_3	1	21/01/2007	5	240	1	7			
d11_4	1	22/01/2007	2	210	1	2			
d11_5	1	25/01/2007	6	195	3	3			
d11_6	1	14/02/2007	2	160	20	5			
d11_7	1	16/02/2007	7	360	2	5			
d11_8	1	13/04/2007	3	240	56	11			
d12_1	1	15/11/2006	3	150	n/a	4	124.286	3.375	8
d12_2	1	15/11/2006		n/a	0	3			
d12_3	1	15/12/2006	5	165	30	4			
d12_4	1	19/12/2006	5	150	4	4			
d12_5	1	06/01/2007	1	90	18	3			
d12_6	1	12/01/2007	5	75	6	4			
d12_7	1	03/02/2007	5	90	23	2			
d12_8	1	17/02/2007	3	150	14	3			
d14_1	1	17/12/2006	4	325	n/a	8	277.5	4.833	24
d14_2	1	30/12/2007	5	230	13	6			
d14_3	1	n/a		n/a	n/a	2			
d14_4	1	n/a		n/a	n/a	3			
d14_5	1	n/a		n/a	n/a	4			
d14_6	1	n/a		n/a	n/a	6			
d16_1	3	03/11/2006	1	60	n/a	4	91.875	3.625	17
d16_2	3	20/11/2006	5	165	17	6			
d16_3	3	19/12/2006	5	120	29	6			
d16_4	3	28/12/2006	1	30	9	1			
d16_5	3	n/a	5	120	n/a	4			
d16_6	3	28/01/2007	3	120	n/a	2			
d16_7	3	02/02/2007	5	60	5	2			
d16_8	3	11/02/2007	3	60	9	4			
d17_1	1	28/10/2006		n/a	n/a	1	n/a	1.75	5

d17_2	1	31/01/2007		n/a	65	1			
d17_3	1	01/02/2007		n/a	1	3			
d17_4	1	18/03/2007		n/a	45	2			
d19_1	1	12/11/2006	4	140	n/a	3	286.25	3.67	10
d19_2	1	16/11/2006	2	400	4	5			
d19_3	1	29/11/2006	1	80	13	2			
d19_4	1	02/02/2007	4	70	65	3			
d19_5	1	06/02/2007	8	710	4	4			
d19_6	1	19/02/2007	2	590	13	5			
d20_1	4	27/10/2006	1	120	n/a	4	215	4.375	29
d20_2	1	03/11/2006	3	180	7	1			
d20_3	1	05/11/2006	8	660	2	1			
d20_4	1	24/11/2006	2	300	19	6			
d20_5	4	14/12/2006	1	90	20	5			
d20_6	1	04/01/2007	1	120	21	6			
d20_7	1	14/01/2007	2	160	10	5			
d20_8	1	03/02/2007	2	90	33	7			
d22_1	1	28/01/2007	3	n/a	n/a	2	74.167	2.215	8
d22_2	1	22/03/2007		n/a	53	1			
d22_3	1	24/03/2007	3	60	2	4			
d22_4	1	24/03/2007	5	60	0	1			
d22_5	1	26/03/2007	5	120	2	1			
d22_6	1	29/03/2007	5	100	3	3			
d22_7	1	02/04/2007	5	60	4	4			
d22_8	1	08/04/2007	3	45	6	1			
d23_1	2	23/10/2006	3	30	n/a	4	50	4.14	19
d23_2	2	08/11/2006	3	60	16	2			
d23_3	2	01/12/2006	3	30	23	11			
d23_4	2	12/12/2006	3	30	11	3			
d23_5	2	23/01/2007	4	65	42	3			
d23_6	2	16/02/2007	4	75	24	3			

d23_7	2	28/02/2007	3	60	12	3			
d24_1	1	31/10/2006	1	90	n/a	8	90	8	8
d26_1	1	12/11/2006	5	120	n/a	4	120	4	4
d27_1	1	22/10/2006	2	115	n/a	8	80.625	30	4.125
d27_2	1	28/10/2006	2	85	6	8			
d27_3	1	26/11/2006	2	55	28	1			
d27_4	1	21/12/2006	3	30	25	1			
d27_5	1	24/12/2006	5	55	3	1			
d27_6	1	31/01/2007	3	70	38	3			
d27_7	1	22/02/2007	5	55	22	3			
d27_8	1	04/03/2007	4	180	10	8			
d28_1	1	23/10/2006	2	60	n/a	1	60	1	1
d30_1	1	06/11/2006	1	75	n/a	3	101.25	4.375	35
d30_2	1	14/11/2006	4	130	8	4			
d30_3	1	21/11/2006	1	110	7	4			
d30_4	1	28/11/2006	3	90	7	2			
d30_5	1	19/02/2007		n/a	83	7			
d30_6	1	20/02/2007	3	n/a	1	6			
d30_7	1	25/02/2007		n/a	4	5			
d30_8	1	26/02/2007	3	n/a	5	4			

Time of Day Coding:

1	Morning		5	Evening
2	Morning/Afternoon		6	Evening/Night
3	Afternoon		7	Night
4	Afternoon/Evening		8	Morning/Afternoon/Evening

Location Coding:

1	Home
2	Work
3	Public Library
4	University (Genealogy Group)

Extract from S5 Shadowing Session

What I would do is - I've got a list here of descendents of a certain ancestor - so what I would do, for example I've got these ones here that were born 1870s/1880s, so there's a fair chance that they'll appear in some shape or form on Scotland' People… What I would say - for example, Agnes Sim, she was born in 1883, so what I would do is go forwards maybe 16, 17 years, and maybe look for a marriage. Right - surname Sim. Female, forename Agnes. So she was born 1883, so you'd probably be looking at 1899 onwards. To start with I'd probably want to keep it quite narrow, and keep it to Kinloss, as it says here. Then I would search - found no matches, OK. If it got to that point, I'd probably think that maybe she didn't marry, she maybe died. But then I'd maybe look in the 1901 census, to see if she was still alive in 1901. I've got her mother's name here as being Justina - I'd probably look for her mother first of all as it's a more unusual name, and I'd hopefully be more inclined to get a result…Well - I would view that - and keep my fingers crossed - oh, I've been here before… Ok, here we go - ahh, OK, here's David's son, he's the father. There is Justina Sim, and that's a daughter, who's 20 in 1901, so it would be Elizabeth Sim (probably Lizzie Sim actually), and then Charles Sim, the son…No sign of Agnes there, so we could assume she was probably working away from home or something there. So I would go back to the 1901 census search, and say Agnes Sim, female. Now she was born in 1883, so she would probably be 17, coming up for 18 in the 1901 census. So I would search between 15 and 20 just to… Now I would think that Kinloss/Elgin would be Moray, probably showing a lack of Knowledge there… So I would try that and see what I would find. I've found one match on one page. Ok, that would seem about right, 17, here we go - she's working as a servant to a Margaret Laing, who's living on her own means. Yes. Yes. OK - it's also a "well-to-do" kind of area as they would have said, because there's a Architect and Surveyor, a solicitor, and a Bank Agent, so it was obviously quite an affluent part of Forres she was in…Sadly she wasn't living on her own means, she was a domestic servant, as most of my relatives were. Oh, there's a retired minister as well. OK - I would then go and print that off, and keep it with all my other records. After that I would maybe go and see if I could find a death for her. I'll try that - so Agnes Sim, female, but I would know that she was still alive in 1901, so I would take from 1901 to 1955. I know she was born in 1883, but I would give her 5 years grace either way because I have seen it… I would have a look at - I would stick to Moray - I'll try all districts now as Moray has returned no matches. Right - 13 matches on one page. I would have a look and see what's what - I would try and concentrate on the ones I thought would most likely be her. Hmmm, I would have a look - she was born in 1883… so, 46 and 17 is 63, which rules out that one… I should have brought my calculator with me!! But I think it probably rules out that one as well. 17 and 35 would be 52, so again that one's out. That one is a bit closer in age - she'd have been 54 in 1935, whereas I assume she'd be 52. I would keep that one - think about that one. This one - 1910 - this one fits in just about to a tee - so I would have a look at this one… It's not her. It's an Agnes Sim that was marries to James Sim, Coalminer. Kilwinning - Daughter of William McIntyre and Mary Gilles - so it's not her. Oh right, oh well. So then, obviously, I'd go back and have a look again. Hmm, I suppose this one as well could be possible.

D28 Diary Entry

URL/Site	Comments
ScotlandsPeople (bm)	
- Timeline	*Viewed HL and EP's marriage certificate*
- 1871 Census Search	*"Love, 39-47, Fife" – 4 matches (probably all relatives). Census return includes HP and EP, alse John Pryde Love (great-grandfather, aged 5)*
- 1861 Census Search	*"Love, 29-37, Fife" – 7 matches (probably all relatives). Including a George Love, 34, in Carnock, Fife. This is confusing as there is also a Carnock in Stirlingshire, where my ggm Annie Chlamers Love (HL and EP's daughter) die in 1925.* *Census return includes HL and EP and their three children. Also includes HL's two daughters from first marriage – youngest son (b.1855) not there – another child mortality?*
- 1851 Census Search	*"Love, 19-27, Fife" – 3 matches – none Henry!* *"Love, Henry, Fife" – 1 match this time – 4 years old. They should be in the Ballingry/ Inverkeithing area. Early records have him as Hendry – try search on H*?* *"Love, H*, Fife" – 2 matches – a 4 year old Henry and a 36 year old Hannah. OK – give in – try EP instead.* *"Pryde, Fife" – 89 matches* *"Pryde, E*, Fife" – 10 matches – 2 Euphemias, on 14 in Carnock, Fife. Does this mean that here family had already moved from Ceres? Looks that way. Not sure if this is the whole family, though we're at the bottom of the page and the last child is still 8.* *"Pryde, Carnock, Fife" – 6 matches. 5 on the census return I had just viewed, on further son, Andrew, 5.*
- 1841 Census Search	*"Pryde, Fife" – 31 matches. EP should be on the first page. Sure enough, there they are. They were in Largo at this point, and EP's mother was still alive (dead by 1851 census, and Andrew was 5 by then, so dies between 1846 and 1851?)* *OK – back to Henry…* *"Love, Henry, Fife" – No matches* *"Love, H*, Fife" – 2 matches* *"Love, Fife" – 26 matches. No Henry, but the rest of his family is there, including a brother Alexander not previously know about.* *"Love, Henry" – 3 matches* *"Love, Henry, 10-20" – 2 matches* *"Love, H*" – 81 matches* *"Love, H*, male" – 46 matches* *"Love, He*, male" – 7 matches, none of them mine.*
- 1851 Census Search	*"Love, H*" – 82 matches* *"Love, H*, male" – 48 matches* *"Love, He*, male" – 7 matches, none of them mine.* *OK, I give in. Henry can wait.*

P.S. Later on I went back and looked more closely at the 1841 Love family census return. The "Alexander" is almost certainly Henry, but it looks like the ink ran out. I think it says "Henr", but in the old handwriting, I can see that it would like "Alex" (or even "Alan") hence the Alexander on the indexes. Still doesn't explain the 1851 absence, though.

Local Studies (84): (Collection, service, Centre, Centre for) Centre for Kentish Studies;

> *Local Studies and Archives (11)* (Service, Centre); Local Studies and Family History (4); Local Studies and History Service; Local Studies, Archives and Museum Service; Local and Naval Studies Library

Local History (25): Centre, Service, Unit; Local History Centre

> *Local History and Archives (4)*; Local history & Genealogy; Local History & Local Studies Service; Local History and Heritage; *Local and Family History (12);* Local History, Family History and Archives

Archives (9): Archives (Record Office and Local History library); (Archives (incorporating Local Studies Library)), Service, Centre, Room

> *Archives and Local Studies (11); Archives and Local History (4);* Archives and Special Collections

Heritage (11) : Zone, Centre, Service

> Heritage and Local Studies; Heritage Services and Archives;

Community history (4); Community History and Archives

History Centre (2): History Centre (contains Local Studies Collection from the Library)

Local (3) Collection, Room; Local and Special Collections:

Record Office and Local Studies (2); Record Office and Local History Library:

Reference (2) : Reference Library & Local History; *Museum;* Scottish and Local History.

Barking and Dagenham: http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/4-heritage/local-history/local-study-centre.html

Barnet: http://www.barnet.gov.uk/index/leisure-culture/libraries/archives.htm

Barnsley:
http://www.barnsley.gov.uk/bguk/Education_Skills/Libraries/Archives%20and%20Local%20Studies

Bath and North East Somerset:
http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/leisureandculture/localhistoryheritage/localhistory/default.htm

Bedfordshire:
http://www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.menus/local_studies.htm

Bexley: http://www.bexley.gov.uk/localstudies/index.html

Birmingham: http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/GenerateContent?CONTENT_ITEM_ID=1869&
CONTENT_ITEM_TYPE=0&MENU_ID=260

Blackburn: http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/server.php?show=ConWebDoc.2865

Blackpool: http://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Services/G-L/LibrariesLocalandFamilyHistory/Home.htm

Bolton: http://www.boltonmuseums.org.uk/bolton-archives/

Bournemouth: http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/Residents/Libraries/Info/Bournemouth/
BmthLibrary_Local_Studies_and_Family_History.asp

Bracknell Forest: http://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/learning/learn-libraries/learn-libraries-looking/learn-libraries-local-studies.htm

Bradford:
http://www.bradford.gov.uk/information_and_communication/library_and_information_services/libraries_local_studies.htm

Brent:
http://www.brent.gov.uk/heritage.nsf/61b63a407eca7a438025663c0065cadd/a64d648c7ba45b7a802570f4005c42c3!OpenDocument

Brighton and Hove: http://www.citylibraries.info/localhistory/default.asp

Bristol: http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Leisure-Culture/Libraries/central-library-family-history-and-local-studies.en

Bromley: http://www.bromley.gov.uk/libraries/librariesintheborough/local_studies_library.htm

Buckinghamshire: http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/content/index.jsp?contentid=-746638797

Bury:

http://www.bury.gov.uk/leisureandculture/localandhistoricalheritage/historicalrecords/default.asp

Calderdale: http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/localhistory/index.html

Cambridgeshire: http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/local_history/

Camden: http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure/local-history/

Cheshire: http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Recordoffice/

City of London:

http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/leisure_heritage/libraries_archives_museums_galleries/lma/lma.htm

Cornwall: http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6773

Coventry: http://www.coventry.gov.uk/ccm/content/education-%26-libraries-directorate/services-for-communities/libraries-and-information-service/local-studies-library.en;jsessionid=aJR4Ea57oXzb

Croydon: http://www.croydon.gov.uk/leisure/archives/lslibrary

Cumbria: http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/libraries/localstudies/default.asp

Darlington: http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Education/Library/Centre+for+Local+Studies/Centre%20for%20Local%20Studies.htm

Derby: http://www.derby.gov.uk/LeisureCulture/Libraries/LocalStudiesLibrary/?qsNavSettings=max

Derbyshire: http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/leisure/local_studies/default.asp

Devon: http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/culturetourism/libraries/localstudies.htm

Doncaster:

http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/Leisure_in_Doncaster/Libraries/Archives_Local_Studies/Archives_and_Local_Studies.asp

Dorset: http://www.dorsetforyou.com/index.jsp?articleid=2203

Dudley: http://www.dudley.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/local-history--heritage/archive-and-local-history

Durham: http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamcc/usp.nsf/pws/Libraries+-+Discover+Local+and+Family+History+Resources

Ealing: http://www.ealing.gov.uk/services/leisure/libraries/local_history_centre/

East Riding: http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/libraries/archives/index.html

East Sussex: https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/EASTSUSSEXCC/Templates/LandingStandard.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID={24F0F92C-EBED-4D1B-

B4D5-C349B8BF0C8E}&NRORIGINALURL=/

leisureandtourism/localandfamilyhistory/default.htm&NRCACHEHINT=NoModifyGuest

Enfield: http://www.enfield.gov.uk/448/index448.htm

Essex:
http://www.essexcc.gov.uk/vip8/ecc/ECCWebsite/dis/guc.jsp?channelOid=15524&guideOid=15191&guideContentOid=15562

Gateshead: http://www.asaplive.com/Local/Home.cfm?Login=Done

Gloucestershire: http://www.libraries.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1768

Greenwich:
http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/Greenwich/LeisureCulture/HistoryAndHeritage/HeritageCentre/

Hackney: http://www.hackney.gov.uk/ca-archives.htm

Halton:
http://www2.halton.gov.uk/content/tourismandleisure/libraries/servicestoyou/localhistory?a=5441

Hammersmith and Fulham: http://www.lbhf.gov.uk/Directory/Leisure_and_Culture/Libraries/
Archives/17430_Archives_and_Local_History.asp

Hampshire: http://www3.hants.gov.uk/library/local-studies.htm

Haringey:
http://www.haringey.gov.uk/index/community_and_leisure/time_out_in_haringey/visiting_haringey/
places_to_visit/brucecastlemuseum/archives.htm

Hartlepool:
http://www.hartlepool.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=629&pageNumber=4

Havering: http://www.havering.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3427

Herefordshire: http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/leisure/archives/3584.asp

Hertfordshire: http://www.hertsdirect.org/libsleisure/heritage1/HALS/

Hillingdon: http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=8976

Hounslow: http://www.hounslow.info/page.aspx?
pointerid=51287B1877F74A8B9F2A8411233D1589&;thelang=001lngdef

Hull: http://www.hullcc.gov.uk/portal/page?_pageid=221,98595&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL

Isle of Wight: http://www.iwight.com/living%5Fhere/libraries/Local%5FStudy/

Islington: http://www.islington.gov.uk/Education/LocalHistory/localhistorycentre/default.asp

Kensington and Chelsea: http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/libraries/localstudiesandarchives/default.asp

Kent: http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/archives-and-local-history/

Kingston: http://www.kingston.gov.uk/browse/leisure/museum/local_history_and_archives.htm

Kirklees: http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/community/libraries/whatservice/localhistory.shtml

Knowsley: http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/archives.html

Lambeth: http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/LeisureCulture/Libraries/Archives.htm

Lancashire: http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries/services/local/index.asp

Leeds:
http://www.leeds.gov.uk/Community_and_living/Libraries/Records_and_archives__access.aspx

Leicester: http://www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council--services/education--lifelong-
learning/leicesterlibraries-home-page/information--reference/family-history/library-resources

Leicestershire: http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/community/libraries/library_services/local_studies.htm

Lewisham: http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/LocalHistoryAndHeritage/

Lincolnshire: http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/section.asp?docid=28154&catid=2855

Liverpool: http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Leisure_and_culture/Local_history_and_heritage/index.asp;

Luton: http://www.luton.gov.uk/Internet/leisure_and_culture/libraries/Libraries%20-
%20Local%20Studies

Manchester: http://www.manchester.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents.php?categoryID=1062

Medway: http://www.medway.gov.uk/index/leisure/archives.htm

Merton: http://www.merton.gov.uk/leisure/history-heritage/localstudies.htm

Middlesbrough: http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure-and-culture/local-history-
and-heritage/

Milton Keynes: http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/library_services/DisplayArticle.asp?ID=31527

Newcastle: http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/librarieslocalstudies

Newham:
http://www.newham.gov.uk/Services/LibraryDetails/AboutUs/ArchivesAndLocalStudies.htm;

Norfolk:
http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/consumption/idcplg?IdcService=SS_GET_PAGE&ssDocName=NCC04231
8&ssSourceNodeId=&ssTargetNodeId=3574

North East Lincolnshire: http://www.nelincs.gov.uk/leisure/localhistory/

North Lincolnshire: http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/NorthLincs/Leisure/libraries/localstudies/

North Somerset: http://www.n-

somerset.gov.uk/Leisure/Libraries/Informationservices/localstudies.htm

North Tyneside: http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk/newlib/local_studies.htm

North Yorkshire: http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3141

Northamptonshire: http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/Leisure/Libraries/Studies/local.htm

Northumberland: http://pscm.northumberland.gov.uk/portal/page?_pageid=107,54495&_dad=

portal92&_schema=PORTAL92&pid=90012

Nottingham City: http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/sitemap/services/leisure_and_culture/libraries/

lc_find_your_local_library/lc_nottingham_central_library/lcli_central_library_floor_4.htm

Oldham: http://www.oldham.gov.uk/community/local_studies.htm

Oxfordshire: http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/publicsite/kcxml/

04_Sj9SPykssy0xPLMnMz0vM0Y_QjzKL94039HcCSZnFO8WHOepHogtZIoSC9L31fT3yc1P1A_QLck

Mjyh0dFQFqSqhk/delta/base64xml/L0lDU0lKQ1RPN29na21BISEvb0VvUUFBSVFnakZJQUFFRaENFS

VFqR0VBLzRKRmlDbzBlaDFppY29uUVZZHaGQtc0lRIS83X01fMzdMLzM0MA!!?WCM_PORTLET=PC

_7_M_37L_WCM&WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=http://apps.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/Int

ernet/Council+services/Leisure+and+culture/History+and+heritage/Oxfordshire+Studies/

Peterborough: http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/page-5682

Plymouth:

http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/leisureandtourism/libraries/whatsinyourlibrary/lns.htm

Poole: http://www.boroughofpoole.com/go.php?structureID=U464057c6c52db&ref=S464AEEBF38EC5

Portsmouth: http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/learning/1042.html

Reading: http://www.readinglibraries.org.uk/services/local.htm

Redbridge:

http://www.redbridge.gov.uk/cms/education__learning/libraries/local_studies_and_archives.aspx

Redcar and Cleveland: http://www.redcar-

cleveland.gov.uk/main.nsf/Web+Full+List/3D7490D6212AE30880256CA90056047F?OpenDocument

Richmond: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/leisure_and_culture/local_history_and_heritage/

local_studies_collection.htm

Rochdale: http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/education_and_learning/libraries/local_studies_library.aspx

Rotherham: http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/graphics/Learning/Archives/_+ArchivesService.htm

Rutland: http://www.rutland.gov.uk/pp/gold/viewGold.asp?IDType=Page&ID=9479

St. Helens: http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/item.do?parentID=100009&category=200111&itemid=1034

Salford: http://www.salford.gov.uk/leisure/museums/lhlibrary.htm

Sandwell: http://www.laws.sandwell.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure-and-culture/local-history-and-heritage/community-history-and-archives-service/

Sefton: http://www.sefton.gov.uk/Default.aspx?page=6384

Sheffield: http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/in-your-area/libraries/archives-and-local-studies

Shropshire: http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/archives.nsf

Solihull: http://www.solihull.gov.uk/heritage/default.htm

Somerset: http://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/culturecommunity/culturalservice/libraries/information/somersetstudies/

South Gloucestershire: http://www.yateheritage.co.uk

South Tyneside:
http://www.southtyneside.info/learningandleisure/libraries/cultureHeritage/default.asp

Southampton: http://www.southampton.gov.uk/libraries/family-history/localstudies.asp

Southend: http://www.southend.gov.uk/content.asp?content=1604

Southwark: http://www.southwark.gov.uk/DiscoverSouthwark/LocalHistoryLibrary/

Staffordshire:
http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/libraryfacilities/localstudiesandfamilyhistory/

Stockport: http://www.stockport.gov.uk/content/leisureculture/libraries/localheritagelibrary/?a=5441

Stockton: http://www.stockton.gov.uk/citizenservices/leisureandents/Libraries/Refservices/

Stoke: http://www.stoke.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/leisure/local-history/

Suffolk:
http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/LocalHistoryAndHeritage/SuffolkRecordOffice/

Sunderland: http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/public/editable/themes/lifelong-learning/Localstudies.asp

Surrey: http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/sccwebsite/sccwspages.nsf/LookupWebPagesByTITLE_RTF/Local+history+centres+in+Surrey+libraries?opendocument

Sutton: http://www.sutton.gov.uk/leisure/heritage/Archives/localstudy.htm

Swindon: http://www.swindon.gov.uk/leisuresport/libraries/librarylocalv2.htm

Tameside: http://www.tameside.gov.uk/archives

Telford: http://www.telford.gov.uk/Leisure+culture+and+tourism/Libraries/Community+history/

Thurrock: http://www.thurrock-community.org.uk/council/libraries/local/

Torbay: http://www.torbay.gov.uk/index/education/libraries/archives/research_service.htm

Trafford: http://www.trafford.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/RecordsAndArchives/
RecordsAndArchives-LocalStudies

Tower Hamlets: http://www.ideastore.co.uk/index/PID/35

Wakefield:
http://www.wakefield.gov.uk/CultureAndLeisure/Libraries/Services/LocalStudies/default.htm

Walsall: http://www.walsall.gov.uk/index/leisure_and_culture/localhistorycentre.htm

Waltham Forest: http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/index/leisure/museums-galleries/vestry-house-
museum.htm

Wandsworth: http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/Home/LeisureandTourism/Heritage/default.htm

Warrington: http://www.warrington.gov.uk/Leisureandculture/Libraries/family_history/default.aspx

Warwickshire: http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/
3A80E798D1893F4480256BA50037E128

West Berkshire: http://www.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=4472

West Sussex: http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/libraries-and-archives/libraries/other-
library-services/local-studies/

City of Westminster: http://www.westminster.gov.uk/archives

Wigan: http://www.wlct.org/Culture/Heritage/heritage.htm

Wiltshire: http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/libraries/localstudies.htm

http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/library_local_history.htm

Wirral: http://www.wirral-libraries.net/display.php?title=lochist&subtitle=culsrv

Wolverhampton: http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/leisure_culture/libraries/archives/

Worcestershire: http://worcestershire.whub.org.uk/home/wccindex/wcc-records/wcc-records-history-
centre.htm

York: http://www.york.gov.uk/leisure/Libraries/Research/local_and_family_history/

Aberdeen City: http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/ACCI/web/site/Libraries/NS/Lib_LocalStudies.asp

Aberdeenshire: http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/libraries/information/local_studies.asp

Angus: http://www.angus.gov.uk/history/libraries/default.htm

Argyll and Bute: http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/leisure/libraries/localstudies/?s=2165022&a=0

Clackmannanshire: http://www.clacksweb.org.uk/culture/localhistoryandlocalstudies/

Dumfries and Galloway:
http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/dumgal/MiniWeb.aspx?id=86&menuid=2148&openid=2148

Dundee: http://www.dundeecity.gov.uk/centlib/loc_stud.htm

East Ayrshire: http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/comser/libraries/heritage.asp

East Lothian: http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/content/0,1094,1485,00.html

East Renfrewshire: http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/heritage (OR
http://www.portaltothepast.co.uk/)

Edinburgh: http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/Internet/Leisure/Libraries/Explore_your_library/
Exploring_Edinburgh/CEC_exploring_edinburgh__the_edinburgh_room

Falkirk:
http://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/community/library_services/local_history/local_history.aspx

Fife: http://www.fife.gov.uk/topics/index.cfm?fuseaction=service.display&subjectid=F6E580D1-E419-
48D7-BCF2BB754F5E949F&objectid=93911A52-CF86-11D5-909E0008C7844101

Glasgow:
http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Residents/Libraries/Collections/ArchivesandSpecialCollections/

Highland: http://www.highland.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/what-to-see/archives/

Inverclyde: http://www.inverclyde.gov.uk/Category.aspx?catid=1015

Midlothian: http://www.midlothian.gov.uk/Article.aspx?TopicID=54&Articleid=16877

Moray: http://www.moray.gov.uk/LocalHeritage/Assets/html_pages/morayheritage.html

North Ayrshire: http://www.learning-north-ayrshire.com/lislocalhistory.htm

North Lanarkshire: http://www.northlan.gov.uk/leisure+and+tourism/museums+and+heritage
/local+history+room/index.html

Orkney: http://www.orkneylibrary.org.uk/html/kirklibrary.htm

Perth and Kinross: http://www.pkc.gov.uk/Education+and+learning/
Libraries+archives+and+learning+centres/Libraries+-+local+and+special+collections/

Renfrewshire: http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/ilwwcm/publishing.nsf/Content/Navigation-els-
LocaAndFamilyHistoryHomePage

Borders: http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/council/specialinterest/heartofhawick/18964.html

Shetland: http://www.shetland-library.gov.uk/services.htm

South Ayrshire: http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/libraries/localhistory.htm

South Lanarkshire: http://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/portal/page/portal/
EXTERNAL_WEBSITE_DEVELOPMENT/SLC_ONLINE_HOME/EDUCATION_LIBRARIES/LIBRARI
ES_COMM_LEARNING/LIBRARIES_RELATED?CONTENT_ID=3560

Stirling: http://www.stirling.gov.uk/index/services_homepage/libraries/lib_history/lib_local.htm

West Dunbartonshire: http://www.wdcweb.info/arts-culture-and-libraries/libraries/library-
services/local-studies/

West Lothian: http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/827/427/456/

Western Isles (Eilean Siar): http://www.w-isles.gov.uk/library/locstud.htm

Isle of Anglesea: http://www.ynysmon.gov.uk/doc.asp?cat=1604&Language=1

Blaenau Gwent: http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/leisure/3881.asp

Bridgend: http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/Web1/groups/public/documents/services/001884.hcsp

Caerphilly: http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/learning/libraries/ourlibraries/bargoedlibrary.htm

Carmarthenshire: http://www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk/eng/index.asp?locID=1499&docID=-1

Ceridigion: http://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3610

Conwy: http://www.conwy.gov.uk/section.asp?cat=3669

Denbighshire: http://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en-gb/DNAP-77LK5Y

Flintshire: http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/webcont/libs.nsf/vwa_ServiceListEnglish/
3E77FD44F94E8F7F80256D71003053E9?openDocument

Merthyr Tydfil: http://www.merthyr.gov.uk/Home/Leisure+and+Tourism/Libraries/
History/default.htm

Monmouthshire: http://libraries.monmouthshire.gov.uk/index.php?lang=EN&navId=47

Pembrokeshire: http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/content.asp?id=11784&d1=0

Powys: http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=647&L=0

Rhondda Cynon Taff: http://www.rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/
documents/hcst/content.hcst?lang=en&textonly=false&xNodeID=445

Swansea: http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2221

Vale of Glamorgan: http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/working/libraries/
family_and_local_history.aspx

Wrexham: http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/english/heritage/archives/index.htm

Appendix 22: List of e-LS Content

Internal Content

http://www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk/4-heritage/archive-photo-ga/photo-gallery-menu.cfm;
http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/4-heritage/local-history/local-history-menu.html (Various)

http://www.barnet.gov.uk/index/leisure-culture/libraries/archives/archives-histories.htm (Pocket histories);

Searchable Databases: http://applications.barnsley.gov.uk/archivesandlocalstudies/baptisms/;
http://applications.barnsley.gov.uk/archivesandlocalstudies/burlands/;
http://applications.barnsley.gov.uk/archivesandlocalstudies/willprobate/

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/leisureandculture/recordsarchives/georgian/default.htm
(Georgian Newspaper Project)

"People, Places and Subjects for digitised maps, photographs, newspaper articles, street directories and more and for specially written articles on popular topics";
http://www.galaxy.bedfordshire.gov.uk/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.wla/wla_bedfordshire_women s_land_army.htm

http://elibrary.bexley.gov.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/e5JLyeOwku/TS/37140002/1/1378/X/BLASTOFF;
http://www.bexley.gov.uk/localstudies/kellys_directories.html

http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/GenerateContent?CONTENT_ITEM_ID=12942&CONTENT_ITEM_T YPE=0&MENU_ID=652 (Historical Maps);
http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/GenerateContent?CONTENT_ITEM_ID=2202&CONTENT_ITEM_TY PE=0&MENU_ID=5396 (Digital Birmingham Photo Archive);
http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/GenerateContent?CONTENT_ITEM_ID=52741&CONTENT_ITEM_T YPE=0&MENU_ID=260 (Various Local History Articles);
http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/GenerateContent?CONTENT_ITEM_ID=1609&CONTENT_ITEM_TY PE=0&MENU_ID=5396 (LOTS of LS content!)

http://www.boltonmuseums.org.uk/bolton-archives/archives-indexes/;
http://spender.boltonmuseums.org.uk/index.html; http://www.boltonmuseums.org.uk/bolton-archives/bolton-parish-map/; http://bowyer.boltonmuseums.org.uk/index.html;
http://www.boltonmuseums.org.uk/collections/local-history/

http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/Residents/Libraries/Library_ww2_Search.asp (WW2 Searchable Database);

http://www.brent.gov.uk/heritage.nsf/24878f4b00d4f0f68025663c006c7944/c10849b0182d9a2880257140 00530166!OpenDocument (Etexts);
http://www.brent.gov.uk/heritage.nsf/24878f4b00d4f0f68025663c006c7944/f2722b8032fa78f380256b1f00 63a3fb!OpenDocument (Local History Articles);

http://www.citylibraries.info/pictures/

http://www.bromley.gov.uk/MeetingsEventsConsultations/Events/2006-01/London+Borough+of+Bromley+Timeline.htm

 http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/external_apps/index.jsp?contentid=1404316476 (Sharing Wycome's Old Photographs); http://apps.buckscc.gov.uk/eforms/libTradeDirectories/index.aspx;
http://apps.buckscc.gov.uk/eforms/libPrisoners/search.aspx (Victorian Prisoners Database);
http://apps.buckscc.gov.uk/eforms/wills/search.aspx (Wills Database)

http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/wtw/ (Weaver to Web Visual Archive);

http://hipweb.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cambscoll/indexRM.html;
http://hipweb.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cambscoll/airmen.html;

http://hipweb.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cromwellcollection/index.htm;
http://hipweb.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cambscoll/history.html

http://maps.cheshire.gov.uk/tithemaps/; http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Recordoffice/Wills/Home.htm;
http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Recordoffice/Railways/Home.htm (Railway Staff Database);
http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Recordoffice/Neston/Home.htm,
http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Recordoffice/Widnes/Home.htm (Building Plans Databases);
http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Recordoffice/Overleigh/Home.htm (cemetery Database);
http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/Recordoffice/Freemen/Home.htm (Freemen of Chester Database);

http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/corporation/family-research/registerSearchForm.asp (London
Generations); http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/wills/index.htm (London Signatures);
Various Local History Articles (@
http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/Corporation/leisure_heritage/libraries_archives_museums_galleries/l
ma/visitor_information/free_information_leaflets.htm);

http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5042 (Timeline);
http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=270 (Various Local History Articles);

http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Education/Library/Centre+for+Local+Studies/VTLocalStudies.htm
(Virtual Tour of the collection)

http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100169/1.html (Historic Gazeteer);
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100274/1.html (History Trail);
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100179/1.html (Access to various image archives);
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100180/1.html (Place Search);
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100177/1.html (Subject Search);
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100181/1.html (Name Search);
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100176/1.html (Timeline/Date Search);
http://www.devon.gov.uk/localstudies/100178/1.html (Map Search)

http://www.doncaster.gov.uk/db/APNI/ (Place Name Archive Index)

http://www.dudley.gov.uk/community-and-living/deaths-funerals--cremations/genealogy-research-
service (Cemeteries Name Index/Database)

http://www.durham.gov.uk/chp/usp.nsf/pws/CHP+-+Community+Heritage+Project+-+Homepage
(Community Heritage Project);
http://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamcc/usp.nsf/pws/History+and+Heritage+-+The+Durham+Record
(Newspaper)

Various Local History articles (http://www.ealing.gov.uk/services/leisure/local_history/): written by
Local Studies Librarian, but not linked from Local Studies

http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/culture/heritage/ (Virtual Heritage Centre);
http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/culture/museums/collections/index.php (East Riding's Treasure Online
- Image Database); http://www.eastriding.gov.uk/libraries/archives/archive_maps.html (Digitised
Maps)

Various Local History Articles (http://www.enfield.gov.uk/448/table%20of%20contents.htm);

http://www.asaplive.com/tram/index.html (Virtual Tram Ride);
http://www.asaplive.com/Local/Histories.cfm (Gateshead Places, Topics, Blue Plaques) - Articles;
Photos;

http://ww3.gloucestershire.gov.uk/DServeLS/DServe.exe?dsqApp=ArchiveLS&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqC
md=Index.tcl (LOCATE online LS catalogue);

http://www.hackney.gov.uk/w-images-database.htm (Historic Images Database);

http://www.hpac.org.uk/newhalton/

http://www.hants.gov.uk/record-office/film/index.html

http://www.hertsdirect.org/libsleisure/heritage1/HALS/famhist/parregs/parishmap/ (Hertfordshire Parish Map);

Various Local History articles: Local People and places

Local History articles on various Local Places;

http://prismdata.hullcc.gov.uk/gallery2/main.php (Hull Image Project); (Fishing Vessel Crew Lists for Hull 1884-1914; searchable database, http://prismdata.hullcc.gov.uk:8080/dserve/dserve.exe?dsqApp=Archive&dsqDb=Catalog&dsqCmd=Search.tcl - Archives?)

http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/linleysambournehousearchive/

http://www.kingston.gov.uk/browse/leisure/museum/kingston_history/photographs.htm

http://artemis.knowsley.gov.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi.exe/ob3t1iHhK6/HU/0/57/49 (Knowsley Digital Collection within Electronic Library);

http://landmark.lambeth.gov.uk/default.asp

http://www.lantern.lancashire.gov.uk/ (Armed Forces Index; Obituaries Index; Transactions Index; Newspaper Index; Census Index; Parish Registers; Image Archive)

Family history - Leeds Absent Voters Index (1914-18 War);

Various articles on the Local Area (http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/LocalHistoryAndHeritage/HistoricalResources/LocalAreas/) and People (http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/LocalHistoryAndHeritage/People/); http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/LeisureAndCulture/LocalHistoryAndHeritage/LewishaminPictures.htm; http://www2.lewisham.gov.uk/lbl/LewishamVoices/index.htm

(http://microsites.lincolnshire.gov.uk/archives/section.asp?catid=6722&docid=27638, Lincolnshire Convicts transported to Australia, Gibraltar and Bermuda)

Local image collection (http://www.manchester.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?categoryID=200062&documentID=326); Online Church Register List (http://www.manchester.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?categoryID=448&documentID=464);

http://www.medway.gov.uk/medwayimages/ (Image Archive); http://cityark.medway.gov.uk/ (Online archives database; inc. Document Gallery); CityArk: Medway Ancestors; http://www.medway.gov.uk/miln (Medway Index to Local Newspapers); Various Local History articles and images;

Various Local History Articles (from Local Studies home);

http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/library_services/displayarticle.asp?DocID=10291&ArchiveNumber= (Newspaper cuttings index); http://www.miltonkeynes.gov.uk/library_services/displayarticle.asp?DocID=10295&ArchiveNumber= (Parish Registers Index);

http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/tlt/ (Images);

(http://apps.newham.gov.uk/History_canningtown/index.htm (Interactive Guided Tour)); Newham Story

http://norlink.norfolk.gov.uk/02_Catalogue/02_001_Search.aspx?searchType=97 (Picture Norfolk); http://www.historic-maps.norfolk.gov.uk/Emap/EmapExplorer.asp (Maps);

http://www.nelincs.gov.uk/leisure/libraries/localpicturegallery.htm

http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/imagearchive/index.html; http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/NorthLincs/Leisure/libraries/familyhistory/Surnames/ (Newspaper

Surname Index);
http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/NorthLincs/Leisure/libraries/localstudies/localhistorypacks/

http://www2.northyorks.gov.uk/unnetie/; Archives Online Calender; Various Local History articles (@ http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=3141)

http://communities.northumberland.gov.uk/

Heritage Search (http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/portal/publicsite/councilservices?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=http://apps.oxfordshire.gov.uk/wps/wcm/connect/Internet/Council+Services/Leisure+and+culture/History+and+heritage/LC+-+HH+-+Heritage+search)

http://www.peterborough.gov.uk/page-5888 (Kitchin Collection - Photographs);

http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/media/Penc_Upload.pdf (The Portsmouth Encyclopaedia);

http://readingimages.epixtech.co.uk/extra/test3.html (Local Studies Illustrations); Various Local History articles

http://www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk/main.nsf/Web+Full+List/5CFD0FB6B1D89DB780256F3C00447EB5?OpenDocument (Historical Photo Archive)

Community Archive (http://www2.richmond.gov.uk/communityarchive/); http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/leisure_and_culture/local_history_and_heritage/local_studies_collection/a_walk_down_hill_street.htm (A walk down Hill Street); local history notes about people and places; Illustrated Timelines;

Local Studies Portal (within opac); Newspaper index;

Newspaper cuttings Index; Articles on Local Towns and Villages;

Online Book; Print-and-go Local Studies Resources

(http://services.salford.gov.uk/forum/);

Virtual tours of Sheffield; Various downloadable Local History articles;

Various Local Memories; (General Memory Sheet); Cuckoo in the Nest video; Hull's butchers video; Misses Blizzard video; Kingshurst Memory Sheet; Stanley Jones Kingshurst Memories Sheet; World War II Memories sheet; Wartime Booklet

http://www.somerset.gov.uk/ssp/photolibrary/; Images also Available from: www.somerset.gov.uk/archives (select "Postcard Collection") and www.somerset.gov.uk/heritage (select "Historic Environment Record");

http://www.southtyneside.info/learningandleisure/localphotos.asp

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/DiscoverSouthwark/LocalHistoryLibrary/historywalks.html

(http://www.archives.staffordshire.gov.uk/DServe/DServe.exe?dsqApp=Archive2&dsqCmd=Index.tcl (Gateway to the past));

Local Heritage Folder Index; http://www.stockport.gov.uk/content/communitypeopleliving/historyandheritage/historicphotos/?a=5441

http://picture.stockton.gov.uk/

http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/apps/heritage/ (Sunderland Then and Now - Images); Various Local History articles; http://www.sunderland.gov.uk/libraries/localstudiesfactsheets.asp

Image Archive (Searchable from http://www.tameside.gov.uk/archives); http://public.tameside.gov.uk/soldierarch/f1077start.asp (Denton Roll of Honour Database);

Various Local History articles; http://www.torbay.gov.uk/apps1/LocalCardIndex/ (Local Newspapers Index);

http://www.trafford.gov.uk/content/tca/ (Trafford Lifetimes Database);

http://www.ideastore.co.uk/index/PID/34?PHPSESSID=007f8ec4e2e6432ded924aa1687b56a6 (Image Gallery); http://www.ideastore.co.uk/index/PID/534 (Archives Online: Marriage Register, Rate Book)

http://www2.walsall.gov.uk/capturing-the-past/; http://www2.walsall.gov.uk/historyimages/; http://www2.walsall.gov.uk/history_projects/; Various Local History articles

http://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/index/leisure/museums-galleries/vestry-house-museum/photographic-archive.htm

Various Local History Articles (http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/Home/LeisureandTourism/Heritage/lhtopics.htm);

http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/Web/corporate/pages.nsf/Links/6FBFF2DC353DADB28025715B00324F68 (Working Lives: Oral History Recordings; Images);

Various indexes of Maps and other Family/Local History resources;

http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/apps/links/refer.do?linkID=1795 (Victorian West Sussex)

http://history.wiltshire.gov.uk/heritage/index.php (Wiltshire Wills); http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/community/

http://gis.worcestershire.gov.uk/website/parishregisters/viewer.htm; Various Images; http://worcestershire.whub.org.uk/home/wccindex/wcc-records/wcc-records-history-virtualex.htm;

http://www.angus.gov.uk/history/gallery/default.htm (Photo Gallery)

http://www.dumgal.gov.uk/newspaperindexes/local.aspx

http://www.dundeecity.gov.uk/bygone/index.php (Newspapers; Internal to Local Authority); http://www.dundeecity.gov.uk/photodb/main.htm (Photo Database); http://www.dundeecity.gov.uk/centlib/maps/main.htm (Maps); LOTS - access from Local Studies Home

http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/viewgallery/gallery.asp?g=441&p=441&cat=James+Mair+Newmilns+Photograph+Collection; http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk/comser/libraries/heritage-local%20history.asp (Various Local History Articles);

http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/documents/contentmanage/el_timeline_background_final1-14197.PDF "Timeline"

http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/heritage/heritage_database_records.htm; http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/heritage/heritage_database_records/heritage_photo_collections.htm (Photo Collections); Various Local History articles on Local People and Places

http://www.fife.gov.uk/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&objectid=58E7BCF2-E7FE-C7EA-0276F7E553EBAD6C (Ordnance Survey Name Books for Fife and Kinross);

http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/en/Residents/Libraries/Collections/Blitz (Blitz on Clydeside);

Watt Library BMD Index; Watt Library Newspaper Index; Watt Library Photograph Collection; Weir's History of Greenock (Accessible from Local + Family History Sources)

Some examples of Photographs and Illustrations

http://libindx.moray.gov.uk/mainmenu.asp; http://www.moray.gov.uk/LocalHeritage/Assets/html_pages/gallery.html (Example images)

Many digitised images within pages;

http://www.orkneylibrary.org.uk/html/photographers.htm (Selected images can be accessed from here);

Digitised images on pages

http://www.stirling.gov.uk/index/stirling/historytimeline/oldpostcards.htm; Searchable spreadsheet indices of historical local newspapers;

Local Newspapers index (within OPAC); Photgraphs and Maps (access from OPAC);

http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/Web1/groups/public/documents/services/therofbookedition1.8g.pdf (ebook); http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/Web1/groups/public/documents/services/002225.hcsp (Articles about notable local people);

Local Studies Catalogue within OPAC (http://ibistro.cardiff.gov.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/MK2qUScNsm/CENTRAL/278280029/1/1439/X);

Various Local History articles (people; places); Images (Places, ships, subjects); Indexes (Index to 'Cardigan and Tivyside Advertiser' 1866-1930; Index to the Ceredigion 'Papurau Bro': a list of 'historical' articles; Indexes to Ceredigion Local History books); (Bibliography of placenames)

(War memorial pictures/inscriptions (Archives) http://www.conwy.gov.uk/drwar.asp?doc=2710&cat=2435&language=1)

http://www.merthyr.gov.uk/Home/Leisure+and+Tourism/Libraries/History/Local+Facts/default.htm; Lots of little bits

http://www.opac.newport.gov.uk/opac/digitalarchive.html (Digital photo archive ; Digital historic books; Local History online articles);

http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=3944&L=0 (Local Studies Exhibitions); http://www.powys.gov.uk/index.php?id=644&L=0 (Powys History Online)

http://archive.rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk/treorchy/index.php (Digital Image Archive); http://webapps.rhondda-cynon-taf.gov.uk/heritagetrail/default.htm (Heritage Trail)

http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5673 (Cambrian Newspaper Index);

http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/english/heritage/famous_people/index.htm (Wrexham Famous people gallery)

List of LS External Content

http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/; http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/

http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar

http://www.blackcountryhistory.org/ (Documenting the Workshop of the World project);

http://www.boltonswar.org.uk/index.html

http://www.dur.ac.uk/picturesinprint/

http://www.historicaldirectories.org/;

http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/lpol/

http://www.historyshelf.org/secf/

http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/;

http://www.mersey-gateway.org/;

http://www.motco.com/default-Markou.asp;

http://www.newsplan.co.uk/

http://www.photolondon.org.uk/

http://www.photolondon.org.uk/;

http://www.picturecheshire.org.uk/

http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/

http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/;

http://www.revolutionaryplayers.org.uk/;

http://www.tengenerations.org.uk/

http://www.tengenerations.org.uk/10Gen/index.html

http://www.thamespilot.org.uk/

http://www.thenortheast.com/;

http://www.tomorrows-history.com/

http://www.tomorrows-history.com/; http://www.wellinever.info/ (Only linked from Libraries, not Local Studies)

http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk

http://www.whatwashere.com

http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/leisure_culture/libraries/archives/workshop (Workshop of the world)

http://www.wowheritage.org.uk/

https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/corporation/family-research/registerSearchForm.asp (London Generations)

Norfolk online access to Heritage (http://www.noah.norfolk.gov.uk/) - INTERNAL, but combined cultural services;

SCAN

SCRAN;

www.historicaldirectories.org

www.imagesofengland.org.uk

www.movinghere.org.uk;

List of LS Contributed Content

http:// www.tengenerations.org.uk/

http://viewfinder.english-heritage.org.uk/; http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline/

http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/

http://www.blackcountryhistory.org/

http://www.boltonswar.org.uk/index.html

http://www.dur.ac.uk/picturesinprint/

http://www.historicaldirectories.org.uk

http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/lpol/

http://www.historyshelf.org/secf/

http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk/;

http://www.mersey-gateway.org/;

http://www.motco.com/default-Markou.asp;

http://www.movinghere.org.uk;

http://www.newsplan.co.uk/

http://www.noah.norfolk.gov.uk/ (INTERNAL, but combined cultural services)

http://www.photolondon.org.uk/

http://www.picturecheshire.org.uk/

http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/;

http://www.revolutionaryplayers.org.uk/;

http://www.thamespilot.org.uk/

http://www.thenortheast.com/;

http://www.tomorrows-history.com/

http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/

http://www.wellinever.info/

http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/leisure_culture/libraries/archives/workshop (Workshop of the world)

http://www.wowheritage.org.uk/

https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/corporation/family-research/registerSearchForm.asp (London Generations)

SCAN

SCRAN

Year	Enquiries by Letter	Enquiries by email
2000-01	284	0
2001-02	246	12
2002-03	336	59
2003-04	195	138
2004-05	216	239
2005-06	194	2642 (We had 247 logged email enquiries and at least as many again that were not logged because they could be answered at once.)
2006-07	110	3421 I think enquiry emails will have increased proportionately but cannot prove it. (LS7)

LS7 Enquiry Statistics

(LS4) Year	Postal	Email
2003/4	4,411	933
2004/5	3,984	1,128
2005/6	3,484	1,467
2006/7	1,050	1, 450

LS4 Enquiry Statistics

We do keep a log of general Heritage enquiries.:

2002/3 = 583 2003/4 = 485 2004/5 = 446 2005/6 = 398 2006/7 = 426

Looks like the figures for this year (2007/8) will continue the upward trend, after a dip in 2005/6. The high figure for 2002/3 was due to our brand new library opening, with obvious interest from the local community/coverage in media etc. (LS8)

Appendix 24: LSHPs Assessed by Users

Aberdeen

Aberdeenshire

Angus

Argyll and Bute

Barnsley

BELB

Bexley

Birmingham

Blackburn with Darwen

Bath and NES

Bolton

Bournemouth

Brighton and Hove

Buckinghamshire

City of London

City of Westminster

Conwy

Cornwall

Croydon

Cumbria

Derby

Devon

Dumfries and Galloway

Dundee

Ealing

Edinburgh

Enfield

Fife

Gateshead

Greenwich

Harrow

Highland

Lancashire

Manchester

Medway

Merthyr

Midlothian

Moray

Neath Port Talbot

Newcastle

Newham

NEELB

Oldham

Orkney

Oxfordshire

Pembrokeshire

Perth and Kinross

Portsmouth

Plymouth

Powys

Reading

Renfrewshire

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Rutland

Sandwell

Scottish Borders

Sheffield

Shropshire

Stirling

Somerset

Surrey

Telford and Wrekin

West Berkshire

Wigan

Wirral

Appendix 25: Anonymised Comments made by participants regarding Local Studies Websites

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
Scotland 1		Links [ANESFHS]	Council design; Council Search Engine		"See that's not helpful - it's the way their search engine works - it brings up Council documents…absolutely useless."; "And we're still waiting for the online catalogue. Aberdeenshire's had its catalogue online for about 2 years." [2006]; "I mean…see you'd have to know that this sat within information services…"; "It's a shame because they have such a huge amount of stuff."	S6
Scotland 2		Collection Description				S1
Scotland 3	Using Google Site Search		Local Studies Structure	Lack of internal links [and external]	It's telling you there everything you need to know, but there aren't enough links on the page - everything's telling you to go back to the index. It's messy, time consuming, and people very well might get lost on the way. It would be better if saying "go back and look at the newspapers page", they had a link to the appropriate page… [S7]	S7
Scotland 4				Lack of online content		S11
Scotland 5				Lack of Content; Lack of collection details		
Scotland 6	Design	Enquiry Service; Catalogue; Links; LS Content [LH; photographs]; Interactive content	Lack of internal links; Navigation/Structure;	Lack of internal links; Confusing terminology; visibility	Better than some, but still left much to be desired to find Local Studies. Also Genealogical info found in other places with no cross links. [FD2]; "Routes to your Roots" had link to Dundee Genealogy Unit a part of Dundee RO and dundeeroots.com which seemed designed to attract visitors…It would be nice to see finding Genealogical info made easier. [FD2]; Dundee.....it took me 4 clicks to get into the Local History section where I was pleasantly surprised to find great data on the Tay Bridge disaster. - Digital images of the register of bodies and articles recovered was fascinating reading. [FE1]; -library & information Services- nothing specifically called "Local Studies" [FE2]	FD1,2; FE1,2
Scotland 7		Collection Details	Terminology/Structure	Lack of Online Content		S8
Scotland 8		Research service	Too much information crammed in; Navigation/Structure		But there's not a huge amount here, and it offers a service, but it doesn't…it does searches for you that you can't actually do yourself. I haven't found it particularly useful - I knew there was a reason I didn't like it.	S2
Scotland 9		Collection Information; Research Service; Digital Archives				S5

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
Scotland 10		Links; Local Studies Content [MIs]; Local Studies Activity [Family History classes]	Search Engine			S5
Scotland 11	Navigation; Visibility; Clarity of Design	Interactive Local Studies content [LIBINDX]; Visibility; Enquiry Service; Proactive marketing; Collection Specificity			I thought this was an excellent site [mass agreement]. One of the best I've come across. It's clear, there's no clutter, you can look and read it without straining your eyes - magic. [FA2]; I thought the LIBINDX in Moray was amazing. And so much information [FA1] I thought that was definitely the best site…They even said that if you wanted searching done, if you told them what you wanted them to look for, they'd send you a quotation for research, and I thought that was really good. [FA1]; When I sort of thought about it, I wondered if there was any significance about it being such a good site and it being in Scotland - I wondered whether they had more enquiries from people in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and they'd realised they needed to cater for that sort of audience. I associate Scotland more with emigration [well, Scotland and Ireland], and I just wondered if they'd found, the Local Authority had found they were getting a lot of enquiries about Family History. [FA1]	S6; FA1,2,3,4,5
Scotland 12			Search Engine		LS/Library not found; I'll just try searching for library. Oh god - my favourite! Risk assessment! [Top result] Closely followed by health and safety!...Culture and Community services? It doesn't tell you much, does it?...[They all look like reports] They do - they're all pdf files…I give up with that. I don't like that site. [S3]	S3
Scotland 13	Site Map; Navigation/Quick links	Links; Service/Collection information, Links; FH Instructional Information [quality]; Activity; Visibility of charging schemes		Online Service Specificity; Collection info better on page rather that in PDF leaflet;	…I was downloading "Family Trees and how to grow them". My boss has just started on this, and I wouldn't have looked at a library for that - I was impressed by that…Yes - I think I was [surprised to find it there], yes. Just because it was so good. You might get signposted somewhere by a library, but I didn't expect a really good document there. [FB1]; it wasn't clear from the website, whether anything is searchable on the website, and it must be assumed that all searching would be done on-site…And another thing - it said all are available in the archive search rooms, and some are available on this website, but it didn't say which ones. [FB3]	S4; FB1,2,3

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
Scotland 14	Visibility; Internal Linking;	Links; Collection/Service Information; Online Subscription Databases; FH/HH instructive information; Visibility; Thoughtful - well "thought-through"	"Messy";		Paisley Central Lending Library: Contact not found…They really need to tidy up their website at Renfrewshire Council! [D08]; It was the only one I've seen that has links to Catholic sources, Jewish sources, the War Graves Commission… Because unless you know about the War Graves Commission, unless somebody tells you, you never find out about it. And that was good, that was unusual, but it was a good site. [FC1]; I think they've got a really competent Local and Family Historian working on that. Unlike every other Local Authority they're very up-front: they're there on the home page and straight through. [FC2]; And the information was easily presented - you didn't have to go looking for it. Somebody had thought about what you were going to ask and had anticipated that. [FC2]; I think it was best in terms of "fully thought-through". …[FC2]	FC1,2,3
Scotland 15	Design and Layout	LS Content [MIs etc]; Online Databases				S9
Scotland 16		Local Studies Content [Images, Downloadable Newspaper Index]; Enquiry service	Navigation: Redundant steps; Design; Usability	Lack of Catalogue; Lack of Service Details; Lack of Collection Specificity	I couldn't find even the opening hours. I found where it was, but not when, and what I would find when I got there. [FF2]; My first impression of the Stirling site was that it looked as if it was going to be quite good, but it didn't deliver on the promise. [FF2]; But I made no sense of it, I wasn't impressed at all - it wasn't a very intuitive site. [FF3]; I found it immensely difficult to find anything remotely resembling Local Studies or Archives, and when I got there, there wasn't any sort of catalogue anyway, so I was a bit disappointed. [FF4]	S10; FF1,2,3,4,5
NI 1			Search Engine; Structure/Navigation	Lack of Content; Lack of Collection/Service Information	Search Engine: "Anti-bullying" policy - under Local Studies?"; "It's very much a Local Authority site for bureaucrats. It's not a user site..."	S7
NI 2				No content	There's nothing, is there? Did you pick these as particularly bad example? [No!!] There's absolutely nothing here. The Irish are particularly unhelpful when it comes to records as well. No - I can't see anything here. [S3]	S3
Wales 1					It's telling me what I can find when I go there, rather than give me access to anything…We have this information, yes. I wouldn't rush back there - I'd probably have a look around for something else. [S8]	S8
Wales 2		Local History Content	Search Engine; Speed	Lack of Family History information		S2
Wales 3			Design/Layout; Structure/Navigation;			S9

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
			Visibility			
Wales 4		Service Details;	Navigation/Structure; Terminology; Search Engine	No Content; No remote catalogue access; Visibility; No satisfactory search results	holdings look small and a lot of the stuff is easy to find for free on the web [FD1]; the workshops might be fun, but how people would find out about them is beyond me [FD1] if it doesn't say "history" or genealogy" or similar.. that's it [FD1]; General search on genealogy yielded zero results. Search on family history turned up a reference to the Pembrokeshire RO. No links found to other sites of Genealogical interest. Search on Local Studies found nothing relevant. [FD2]; does not appear to have much in the way of services or material relevant to Genealogy, and the Library has done little to facilitate Internet access. . [FD2]; I was at a loss to find anything of value in Pembrokeshire [FE1] ; [O]ne result under F - Family History - at Haverfordwest Library, a short description of their small collection. - Not too much here! -disappointing overall for the genealogist [FE2]	FD1,2; FE1,2
Wales 5		Online Content [History Online]	Navigation/Structure XXX; Visibility; Search Engine; "messy"	Visibility; Lack of Collection/Service information; Lack of Catalogue; Online content not found by all	I actually had problems finding what I wanted in the Powys one, but once I got there, and found the right place, there was a lot of useful stuff in there [agreeing noises]. It was getting there in the first place. [FF1]; The comment I've made is in the A-Z, I tried Family History, Local History, genealogy, History, Archives, and all of them took me back to the lifelong learning - we have a number of courses in a number of centres, and that was the only place I kept ending up. Under libraries all I found was something about Inter-library loans. [FF2]; Not too impressed, messy website… I mean, I didn't get far enough in to find out what they actually had, but I didn't find the actual navigation of the site very good at all. [FF3]; But I think, I would keep coming back to cataloguing. Powys had no online catalogue themselves, and a mere 500 records are indexed on Archives Network Wales [which is the equivalent of A2A in Wales]. And 500 out of their entire holdings isn't very good I think. [FF4]	FF1,2,3,4,5
Wales 6				Lack of content; perceived lack of effort	Hmm. It's not something they've spent a lot of time on - it doesn't appear to be something they're giving great priority to at the moment. [S7]	S7
England 1			Structure/Navigation	Lack of Collection/ Service Information; Lack of Internal Links		FC1,2,3

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
England 2		Local Studies Content [Photograph/Image Collection]				S9
England 3	Site Map;	Links; Subscription Databases [including ALE]; Searchable online content	Long pages and scrolling;	Lack of online content [S8]	Was it Leicester University that was doing that project on sampling trade directories?…[I]t's useful that there's a link to that, because people often say they have directories, but they don't say that they're digitised anywhere else! [FB3]	FB1,2,3; S8
England 4		Local Studies Content [Cottontown]	Search Engine		I thought the content was very good. Maybe because it was my part of the world, but having a quick browse I thought "oooh, this is worth pottering through"! If you're interested in Mill workers and Mill towns, it's really quite good. [FA2]	FA1,2,3,4,5
England 5		Contact Details/Phone Number [S6]; Online Content [Newspapers]; Links; LS layout; FH instructive information	Structure/Navigation;	Lack of online content;	I thought when you looked at what they said in there, it was quite reasonable and well laid out. I don't think they were making a pretence of being anything other than a general information guide, and as far as that went, fine. [FA1];Bath and North-East Somerset didn't seem to cater for the remote user at all - it told you where to go to get it - "you might want to see it here"! [FA5]	FA1,2,3,4,5; S6
England 6			Council Search Engine	Attitude and Language	[T]hat's really encouraging - "this is not an easy hobby"! … Clearly they have limited view about what people… I mean OK, they've got information, but again it's quite "genealogy's not easy" - I mean really!! Well, you could be quite easily put off by that. [S6]	S6
England 7	Internal links [to BMD]	Internal links [to BMD]; Links [vg]; Content			They give parking help - so that's really reasonable giving you some help, because a stranger may be going to the library. As I found out when I was looking for Family History in Henley. I parked, walked halfway across the town, then found there was a huge Tesco care park right behind the library - I could have got in there. [S4]; They're giving more information about what they're actually doing. That's got lots of Local History stuff to hunt around in. [S4]	S4
England 8		Library/Local Studies Activity; Local Studies/Local History Content; Service Info/details			They give parking help - so that's really reasonable giving you some help, because a stranger may be going to the library. As I found out when I was looking for Family History in Henley. I parked, walked halfway across the town, then found there was a huge Tesco care park right behind the library - I could have got in there. [S4]; They're giving more information about what they're actually doing. That's got lots of Local History stuff to hunt around in. [S4]	S4
England 9	Navigation			Lack of Interactive Content		S1

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
England 10		Catalogue	Structure/Navigation	Lack of digitised Content	I'm getting lost, I'm going back to the start. Ahhhh - that wasn't very easy to find!!! [S8]	D01; S8
England 11	Navigation; Design and presentation	Collaborative Catalogue [Covering all relevant repositories]; Detail of catalogue; Subscription Databases		Responses when attempting to retrieve document remotely	One of the things I liked about the Westminster one was the amalgamation - if you use the search engine, although, on the Local History site it gave the impression that you were only searching the library archive, or you were only searching the local Record Office archive, the reality was if you used either it actually came up with a combined list of everything, and it was very clear which office held which document, which I rather liked. [FF1]; But overall I did find it was very welcoming, easy to navigate round. If I'd been planning a visit I think it would have been very useful, even being able to make the best use of my time when I got there, make sure you could find, you know, that they did have what I was expecting to find, or not, and then plan my visit. [FF2]	FF1,2,3,4,5
England 12		Local History Content;	Design; Too much information per page;		There does seem to be a fair bit on specific commercial and trade aspects of it, the history of the county. Can be quite a lot of good information on it - it's not particularly attractively set out...that's quite useful, if you were researching down there. [S7]; It works well, the site, but there's something not terribly attractive in its layout, I don't know. [S7]	S7, S9
England 13	Large Text - presentation	Content [Clarity - types of material];	Navigation; Terminology [FH/Gen]; Council Search Engine; Lack of Internal Links;	Lack of Visibility; Collection Specificity; Lack of Catalogue;Lack of Service Information [S3; FB3];	in terms of how easy it is for the remote user, I thought it was very poor. How do you find out whether what you want is there? Can you phone and check? And I came across a thing that said "please contact us if you do not see what you require - use the number at the bottom of the page" or something like that. There were NO numbers at the bottom of the page - you had to go right back to home, find where the central library was and then use the central library address. [FB3]	S3; FB1,2,3
England 14			Appearance		Hmm - not very informative. See what that says. Hmmm, you get to know that it's libraries and archives, but it's not a very professional looking website, but the information is the important thing. [S10]	S10
England 15			Structure/Terminology; Lack of Navigation options			S11
England 16		Collection Information		Lack of Online Content	So you have to tell them what you're looking for and…it's not the same, is it? [S1]	S1

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
England 17	Language; Navigation	Language; Collection/Service Information; Clarity; FAQ	Design;		This site is actually a bit more helpful and a bit more "less official" in the way it phrases things I think....That's quite good, look - they obviously know what questions they've been asked a lot of, and they've got an answer there for them, and you're not going to waste time. [S7]; It's not a particularly pretty-looking site, but I think it's very clear. It's easy to get to where you want to, and it gives you the kind of information you would need, particularly for somebody coming from a distance, it's telling you exactly what you can get, and it's offering to give you one free search which is pretty decent, as I'm sure they're fairly busy. And they're offering to put you in touch with a local researcher if you can't get there - you know - I think it's giving you everything you really need, that one, short of putting everything online. Which would be even better! [S7]	S7
England 18		Research service	Navigation/Structure; Council Search engine	No remote catalogue access; No remote database access; Lack of Content; Lack of Links; Not good at all for remote users	Enfield I muddled around in. - Could not find local studies until I resorted to an alphabetical search on "L" and then found local history at the bottom of the list. - I was not impressed by the overall website or the content of their local history. [FE1]; Search for 'genealogy' turned up two items - one a report on leisure, the other, 'local history people finder' was a queries page, mainly people seeking to make contact with estranged family, etc. not impressed with this site as it pertains to family history[FE2]	FD1,2; FE1,2
England 19		Local Studies content [Photos/Images; Local History information; Links	Navigation/Structure, Lack of Internal Links	Lack of Internal links;	LS/Library not found [by S5];	S5; FC1,2,3
England 20			Navigation/Structure; Visibility	Vague Information; Visibility;		S6; FC1,2,3
England 21				Lack of Interactive Content		S9
England 22	Navigation; Internal Links	Links; FH/LH Instructional information; LS Content and interactivity[Lancashire Lantern; Police Database]; Library Activities	Lack of Breadcrumb Trail; Lack of links with neighbouring authorities	Lack of links with neighbouring authorities; Collection Specificity [Both online and h/c]	The Lancashire Library had an extensive list, but it included things that were both online to you at home or wherever you were, and online "in the library" [FB3] – Need to be more specific;	S4; FB1,2,3

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
England 23	Navigation;	Local Studies Content [Church register list, Images], Family History instructive information, Collection Information, Links, Enquiry email	Scrolling/Long pages, Lack of Internal Links/Cross-referencing; Inconsistency of Terminology	Inconsistency of Terminology	The [Manchester] one had real usable information. [FD1]; Manchester needs to teach the others how to set up their websites! - Local Family History was prominent and easy to access. - I was impressed and don't even have any research to do there....yet! - Will likely return at some point just to have a further read. [FE1]; The info. was easy to find and the sites were easy to navigate. They actually had databases one could use. [FE2]	FD1,2; FE1,2
England 24		Local Studies response to enquiries; FH Awareness	Search Engine	Lack of Site Activity; Lack of Collection/Service Details	"It picks up on the fact that this is a huge area of growing interest and they need to market it, because that will bring folk in"; "Luckily I don't have anyone who lives in Kent."	S6; FA4
England 25	Navigation [Multiple Routes]; Communication	Service/Collection information; Lnks;	"Councilness"; Advertising; Lack of Internal Links;	Broken Links; Lack of Internal Links; Misleading information; Out of Date Information; Visibility; patronising tone; repetitive	Again there were lots of PDF documents - admittedly they weren't big, they were quick and easy. But there were no links within these things - you just had to read them and go back again. [FF1]; But the killer for me was, on one of the PDF documents it said "Family History may be time-consuming and costly" - tantamount to saying GO AWAY!!! I know it can be costly, but I still want to do it! [FF1]; The Newcastle one was probably not quite as comprehensive because there were some things that actually looked like they were about to deliver useful information, but were in fact just the information sheets of what their holdings were, which yes, are useful in themselves, but was not perhaps what I was anticipating. [FF2]; And those information sheets that were there twice. They were once clearly identified as information sheets, and then you had other links that said things like censuses, and lo and behold you got back to the same information sheets! There was me expecting something more specific or general, or something different entirely, but found it was the same thing. [FF2]	FF1,2,3,4,5
England 26	Design; Navigation [expanding menus]	Service/Collection information; Interactive Content [LH Discussion Board]; FH instructional information; Links			Markov's Ice-cream Shop - a mystery! Gasp!...So it's just a little chat going on - great! So, they're trying to get local people to speak to each other about people in their area, and Family History. Yeah - that sounds good. [S2]	S2
England 27	Design			Lack of Collection/Service information		S4

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
England 28	Navigation; Ethos of communication and customer service;	Digitised Documents; Collection/Service information; Detailed/easy-to-use Catalogue; LS Content [Photographs]; Enquiry service	Lack of internal links;	Dead link; Lack of internal links; No navigatable route back out of catalogue	Yes, I would agree. The other thing I liked about the Oxfordshire site was, on one or two pages they actually had images of various documents or items which none of the others had - they had actual physical pictures of documents - I liked that. [FF1]; The Oxfordshire and the City of Westminster ones I was very impressed with - that was the sort of the thing I was expecting to find, perhaps slightly more than I was expecting to find, based on the Southampton one. [FF2]	FF1,2,3,4,5
England 29				File formats/sizes	Portsmouth Library/Archives/Record Office have created a PDF document, and it's about 80 or 90 pages long, telling you all of the documents that are available in the Public Library and the Public Record office. It's a lovely document, but I had to print the thing off. I thought "I'm not opening that every time I want to double check if they've got something"! [FF1]	FF1
England 30	Navigation; Visibility	Collection/Service Information; Links			[I]t's going to link you into other things which is good. That's what you need when you're doing this, absolutely. You need to be able to link in into everything. [S2]; It looks like perhaps the library section of the council has been in charge of that…[S2]	S2
England 31		LH information; LS Content [+++]	Structure/Navigation; Visibility; Search Engine; Terminology of A-Z	Visibility	Only FA5 found the scanned Local Studies material; I was amazed at how much scanned material you could get access to on Reading's site - very impressed. Especially as they had a directory you could get into online which was great. And I wish Worcestershire was so advanced! [FA5]; I went into Leisure and Culture, and through the "History of Reading" link came across all the Local Studies scanned material, which was amazing…photographs, maps, plans…a complete directory, so you could look people up in the directory - masses, I was really amazed. It was great: if I'd people in Reading I would have been laughing! [FA5]; It wasn't easy to get to at all, and I'm used to doing that sort of thing! [FA5]	S2; FA1,2,3,4,5
England 32		Collection/Service Information;				S3
England 33		LH information [although still wants more]			So this sort of information - it's a bit skinny, but its a start. At least you've got a picture of what the town looked like, where the name comes from and so on…That's got interesting bits and pieces, nothing very meaty… If I'd found family and was trying to find some background information - what life was like for them - there's a little bit there - I would want rather more than there is there. [S8]	S8

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
England 34		Links; Service/Contact information; FH/LH instructive information; ALE	Uninviting design; misleading navigation; speed; Usability	Lack of content; Lack of collection specificity	Landing page has a cranky looking little girl on it [FD1]; There was a libraries and archives link on the landing page, so I was easily able to find it, when clicked it opens to show other things within. When I look, though I find it difficult to find an "archive" section…Sheffield seems to be mostly Ancestry centred, they mention documents, but they don't seem to say what the documents contain [FD1]; The access to Genealogical information is not easy. Pity, there is some good stuff. [FD2]; I found nothing in online services. - Nothing in a search for local studies or family history. - No online databases were apparent. [FE1]; Found this site somewhat difficult to use and lacking in information on Family History/Local History. [FE2]	FD1,2; FE1,2
England 35		Links;	Navigation; Speed	Lack of Visibility; Collection Specificity; Lack of service/contact details	Well, there was an A-Z to navigate to the library section - that was alright. But trying to find Local Studies was difficult - was it Leisure and Culture, or was it Lifelong Learning, or something else? [FB1]; I didn't think it was particularly useful to a remote user, but it did link into the local Family History places, so that was good. [FB1]; What I found interesting was there was a map on the front page, but there was neither a site map, nor were there any references to maps. It was a pity I thought - surely they're going to let me have a map of Shropshire, as I was quite intrigued as to where the eastern boundary of Shropshire was, as I've got some family connections in that area. [FB3]; …and then of course at the bottom of the page it said "for more information please contact the archive service directly". All the contact details were available on every page on the catalogue, but they weren't on the help page. They weren't on the page that talked about it! [FB3]; Trouble was, I didn't know what was in the database. Did it have the same content as the other website? So, in other words, the actual scope of the database wasn't described, so you didn't know whether this complemented or overlapped with the other stuff. There was no obvious way of seeing what was on it. [FB3]	S5; FB
England 36		Catalogue [Integration of departments, accuracy]			Library consortium: There's an interesting solution in Somerset, because there isn't such a thing as a Somerset libraries website, there's a consortium of, I think it's 4 or 5, Local Authority library services, including Bristol I think. But it's great - in one click you can be searching 5 different organisations, with reciprocal membership available as well. [FF4]	FF3,4

Council Site	Positive Council	Positive Local Studies	Negative Council	Negative Local Studies	Comments	Assessed by:
England 37		Content [Photographs]; Catalogue,	Structure/Navigation; Ease of Use; Terminology	Visibility; Patronising tone in places		FC1,2,3
England 38			Navigation/Structure	Lack of Content		S1
England 39	Design			Lack of Content		S1
England 40		Links; Collection/Service Information; LS Content [Wigan World]; Research Service	Navigation/Structure	Lack of Clarity of Audience [Wigan World]	Wigan World - a good initial idea, but it had lost something in the application!...[T] idea of taking a canal trip. I thought that would be great for kids, but when I started I thought kids would actually have great difficulty navigating this… They hadn't decided who their audience was before deciding what information to put up. [FA5] ; It doesn't jump out at you, does it? Information services, it could be that. Emmm - it could be that… [S11]	S11; FA1,2,3,4,5
England 41			Navigation/Structure; Cluttered design	Lack of Collection specificity; Spelling errors;	It's not going too well, is it? These websites are obviously designed by men! [S3]; That took a bit of finding, didn't it? [S10]	S3, S10

Appendix 26: Summary of Participant Comments: Council Website Elements

Positive Elements	Negative Elements
Navigation (12) Multiple Routes; expanding menus; Quick links	*Navigation/Structure* (25) :Redundant steps, misleading, Lack of Breadcrumb Trail, Lack of options
Design and presentation (8): Large Text, Clarity	*Council Search Engine* (14)
Internal links (3)	*Design/Appearance* (10): Uninviting, cluttered, Messy
Language and Communication (3); Ethos of communication and customer service	*Terminology* (7): Confusing. Inconsistency
Visibility (3)	*Lack of Internal Links/ Cross-referencing* (6)
Site Map (2)	*Lack of Visibility* (4)
Use of Google Site Search	*Usability* (3)
	Speed (3)
	Too much information per page (2)
	Long pages/Scrolling (2)
	Advertising
	Lack of links with Neighbouring Authorities
	"Councilness"

Positive Elements	Negative Elements
Online Local Studies Content (28)	*Lack of Content* (19): General e-content, Family History-specific, Digitised, Online, Interactive
Service/Collection Information (21): Specificity, Clarity, Collection Description	*Lack of Collection/ Service Details* (16): Lack of Specificity both online and physical, lack of contact details
Links (19): External, internal	*Lack of Visibility* (10)
Enquiry /Research service (8)	*Attitude and Language* (7) : vague information, patronising tone, misleading information, spelling errors, perceived lack of effort, lack of clarity of audience
FH Instructional Information (8): Quality	**Lack of internal links** (6)
Catalogue (6): (Collaborative, Covering all relevant repositories; accuracy, detail, usability	*Lack of remote access* (5): Catalogue, databases,
Subscription Databases (5): including ALE	*Lack of external links* (3): Lack of links with neighbouring authorities
Language and Tone/Transparency (5): Clarity of communication	*Lack of Catalogue* (3)
Library/ Local Studies Activity (4): Family History classes	*Lack of Site Activity* (2); Out of Date Information, broken links
Visibility (3)	*Inconsistent Terminology* (2): Confusing
FAQ	*Inappropriate File formats/sizes* (2)
	No navigable route back out of catalogue

Website	1	2	3	4	5	6	Genealogical Experience
S1	S	N	S	S	S	***	4
S2	A-Z	A-Z	N	N	N[S]	***	2
S3	S	S◉A-Z	S	N	S	***	2
S4	S	A-Z	N [A-Z]	S	***	***	3
S5	S [Browse N]	N◉S	N	S◉N	S	***	3
S6	N	N[S]	N◉S	N◉S	N◉S	S	4
S7	A-Z◉S	N	S	S◉N	S	***	3
S8	A-Z◉S	N	N	N	N◉S	***	1
S9	S	S	S	N	N[S]	***	2
S10	N	N◉S	N[S]	N◉A-Z	N	***	3
S11	N	A-Z	N	***	***	***	2

Appendix 29: User Expectations and recommendations:

Minimum levels of service for e-Local Studies

	Suggested by:
Location, opening hours and contact details	FA5, FC1, FD1, FE2, FF2
Guaranteed reply to enquiry	FD1, FF4?
What and Where	FC1
Introduction to Genealogy/Family History	FD2
Links	FD2
Catalogue/More Specified Holdings List	FD1,2, FF2,4
Historical Information on the Local Area	FD1
Instructions on how to obtain information or use services remotely	FF3
List of Indices	FG2

e-Local Studies Wish List

	Suggested by:
Parish Registers online	FA2, 4, 5; FC3; FD1)
MIs (and/or online indexes)	FA4; FC1; FD1; FF1
Online Databases pertinent to Local Area	FB2; FE1, 2;
Photographs (Local Area and people, Past and present)	FA3,5; FC1,2; FF1
Links	FA1,5; FD1,
Links to online books	FC3
referrals to other sources/repositories	FA5
Family History instructive info	FA1, FD2
Index of newspaper BMD announcements	FA1
full online access all material	FB2, FF2
Standardized availability of services	FB2
saying clearly what they have … If they don't have it on yet, links to who else might have it - doing signposting.	FB1
Lists of Holdings/separate Local Studies catalogue	FC2, FD1
Comprehensive detailed Catalogue	FF4
Clarification of where physical materials are located	FC3
Specific stating of what could be **remotely** accessed online	FB3
Breadcrumb trails	FB3
Contact details WITH the Family History information	FB3, FC2
Google search	FB3
Links and collaboration with Family History Societies; Local researchers	FB1; FE1
Maps	FC1
Easy Navigation	FC2; FE2
Feedback facility	FB3
Better links to, county or local historical/archaeological societies	FG2
Something like Find My Past, with links to siblings, from parents and vv	FG2
Ability to view (for immediate payment online) the document you think might be a help.	FG1,2
Some Local History, Social History, background	FC1; FE1; FE2
Obvious instructions for remotely obtaining information from them	FE2

Suggestions of Elements Local Studies could take from Commercial Sites

	Suggested by:
Ability to search indexes and purchase related images online	FG1
Simplicity and Clarity of Design and Layout	FA2
Usability of Navigation and Signposting	FA2
Visibility (of research service)	FA3
Simplicity	FA2
Ease of Database Use	
General Visibility	FA1
Transparency of Research Service (and charging)	FA1,2,3,
Images of Sample Documents	FF4
Locally-relevant databases	FE2
Information on context of collections	