

Customizing Source Citations

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I don't know about most of you, but the main reason that I made the switch to TMG way back in 1998 was because of the fantastic ability to source my data. Previously I had been using Ultimate Family Tree (which is, of course, no longer produced), which also had a great capability to record sources. When that program went the way of the Dodo bird, I was on the hunt. I even tried (gasp!) Family Tree Maker! Rather comically, I loaded it, uploaded my file into it, played with it for less than 20 minutes, and promptly uninstalled it from my system, being utterly disgusted with the complete lack of a good method for entering and citing sources. Then I stumbled onto TMG in an ad in Ancestry magazine. I took one look at it online, and was hooked. But being hooked is both a blessing and a curse, as we all know. ☺ The blessing? The wonderful way that TMG handles sources and citations. The curse? The fact that as with most aspects of TMG, the way that each of us creates those sources and citations is completely different.

Customizing source citations can be a little tricky. For some great pointers, I recommend the following:

Terry Reigel's Customizing Your Source Citations <http://tmg.reigelridge.com/Sources.htm>

Getting the Most Out of The Master Genealogist, Appendices B, C, and E.

The Help File in TMG under Source Types and Source Elements

In addition, there are a couple of authors who have made it their business to help us out, if we so desire. They are Elizabeth Shown Mills, author of "Evidence Explained", "Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian", and "QuickSheet: Citing Online Historical Resources" and Richard Lackey, author of "Cite Your Sources: A Manual for Documenting Family Histories and Genealogical Records". In TMG, we have the capability to utilize their (Wholly Genes') interpretation of what each of those authors had in mind, or we can customize our sources types ourselves, which in turn customizes our source citations. I personally am not a fan or a user of Lackey's book, so I really can't help out if anyone wants to know anything about that. I do have all of Ms. Mills' books. I base most of my own customizations upon her suggestions.

For example, (and this is my personal favorite, as it covers many things) I have a source type called Private Holdings: Artifact. I use this source type to cover things like photos I have inherited, photograph albums, scrapbooks, etc. Here is how it is set up:

Edit Source Type

Custom Source Type : Private Holdings: Artifact

is most similar to : Manuscript (Unfiled)

Full footnote

<[CD]><, [COMPILER]><, [RECORD TYPE]><, [DATE]><; privately held by [REPOSITORY]><, [REPOSITORY ADDRESS]><. [SECOND DATE]><. [COMMENTS]>

Short footnote

<[CD]><, [COMPILER]>< [RECORD TYPE].>

Bibliography

<[COMPILER]><. [RECORD TYPE].>< [DATE].>< Privately held by [REPOSITORY]><, [REPOSITORY ADDRESS]><. [SECOND DATE].>

Reminder

This is how it will appear:

FF: Eugene McCawley Ancestry Page, Lynn McCawley, Scrapbook, 2007; privately held by Thomas McCawley, Nebraska. 2008.

SF: Eugene McCawley Ancestry Page, Lynn McCawley Scrapbook.

Bibliography: Lynn McCawley. Scrapbook. 2007. Privately held by Thomas McCawley, Nebraska. 2008.

Here's another example, this time utilizing my custom obituary source type:

Edit Source Type

Custom Source Type : Obituary/Newspaper Item

is most similar to : Obituary/Newspaper Item

Full footnote

"[ARTICLE TITLE],"< [RECORD TYPE],> [ITAL:][NEWSPAPER TITLE][:ITAL], [LOCATION]<, [DATE]><, [PAGE]>.

Short footnote

[ITAL:][ARTICLE TITLE][:ITAL]<, [DATE]><, [PAGE]>.

Bibliography

[LOCATION]. [ITAL:][NEWSPAPER TITLE][:ITAL]<, [DATE]>.

Reminder

In this case, I have changed the standard tag to suit my tastes. This will output as:

FF: "REMPE - Mrs. Anna Marie," Obituary, *The Lincoln Evening Journal*, Lincoln, Nebraska, February 12, 1975, Page 29, Deaths and Funerals.

SF: *REMPE – Mrs. Anna Marie*, February 12, 1975, Page 29, Deaths and Funerals.

Bibliography: Lincoln, Nebraska. *The Lincoln Evening Journal*, February 12, 1975

Obviously, how good your source citations are will depend on how good your source types are and the verbiage we use in them. I have not always been so concise in my source types, and therefore in my citations. In fact, the above listed source type is one that I am still switching several hundred sources over to. Previously, I had listed each photograph, etc. as a single source, rather than citing the entire collection. Naturally, others of you might wish to do just that. This has been an ongoing discussion over the years on the TMG-L mailing list-the lumpers versus the splitter. In my own case, I am a little of both. If it is something such as a photograph that I know will only be sourced a handful of times, I go for the collection (i.e. the photographs of Charles Olin). If I can see that it will be sourced more (such as a really informative obituary), then it becomes a source unto itself. With that said, I find that I am slowly moving away from that and going with the newspaper as the source and then referencing the obituary by date, edition (if applicable), section, page, etc.

When creating a good source citation, remember to ask yourself what the source is and where you found it. I would say that at the least, those are the two most important parts of a good citation. But generally there are more parts to it. Where within the source did you find the information-was it a page, a photograph, a chapter, etc? If it is a book that you were only able to view through inter-library loan, then note it as such, and remember to reference what repository actually holds it. I probably go to the extreme, but I put as much into a citation as I can. For example, a normal census citation includes all the following data in the Citation Detail:

City, County, State. Sheet No(s). , Supervisor's Dist. No. , Enumeration Dist. No. , Ward of the City: , House No. , Dwelling No. , Family No. , Lines . Address: .

I am fully aware that not all that information is necessary in the citation, but it not only makes it much easier for me to go back and look it up again (if doing so on Ancestry), but I hope it will enable future researchers to locate my sources with a minimum of difficulty.

If you are interested in seeing what all my source types look like, please let me know, and I can email you the backup file of source types. I have placed them in their own project, so that if I need to recreate them quickly, I can. If you do request them, you will need to do a few steps, as this is a project backup file. You will need to open TMG and restore the backup to a new project, so that you don't mess up the data in your own project. You will then be able to view the source types by simply going to Tools>Source Types.