

Making the Reference Field Work for You

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Ok, show of hands, how many of you utilize this small, seemingly inconsequential field on the main screen? Not many, correct? Hopefully after this presentation that will change. I didn't used to use it either-until I decided to merge all my databases (2 brothers-in-law, 1 sister-in-law, hubby, heirlooms, and correspondence) into one. I was searching for an easy way to differentiate which line any given person came from.

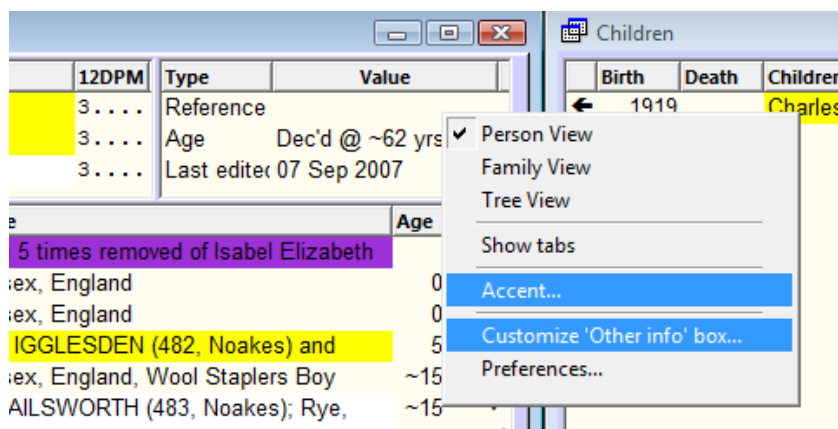
At this point I know many of you are reading this and thinking-ok, there are SO many other ways to do this-i.e. accents, flags, etc. All those are well and good, but with 13 major "lines" that I want to keep track of, trying to remember colors of accents and what they mean tends to be a little pointless. Don't get me wrong-I still fully utilize accents for this very purpose-but-I just can't remember that dark yellow is my maternal grandmother's line, dark purple is my paternal grandfather's line, etc. As for flags, those are great as long as you are showing the flags window. However, if you opt not to constantly have that window open, or are looking at the picklist, it isn't helpful. Hence my decision to utilize the reference field in conjunction with the previous methods listed.

Some things you should know about the reference field:

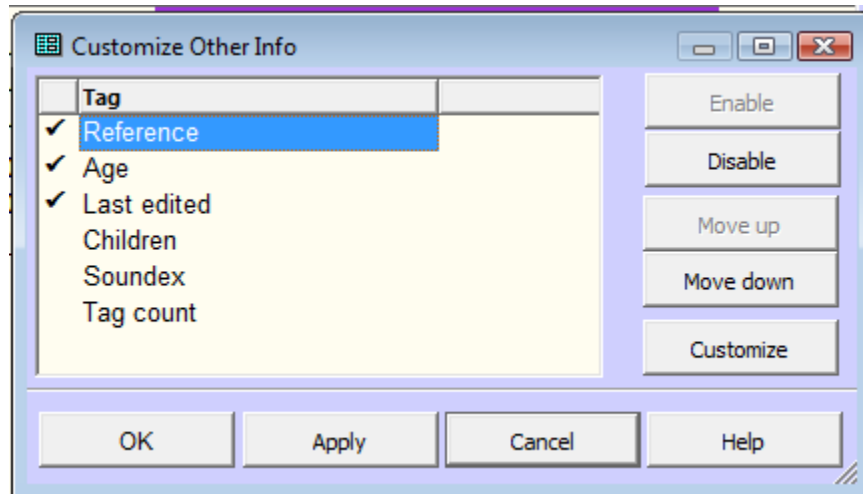
1. You can make it as long as you want.
2. You can use any combination of letters, numbers and characters in it.
3. You can easily choose to have it show on picklists, the project explorer, etc.
4. It can be set for a large group of people at once using the TMG Utility-this is quite an advanced and intricate move, and is better suited for another discussion. If you wish to look it over, it can be found here (as long as you have the TMG Utility installed in the same directory as I do): <C:\Program Files\TMG Utility\Help\setrefbyname.htm>
5. It is linked to the individual, not any of their events, or tags.

What can you place in the reference field? Anything your heart desires! I use mine to keep track of the major family lines. You could use it to reference the way your paper files are set up (which mine does, as mine is based on family lines). Some other uses are to assign specific reference numbers (i.e. Richardson00001). This could be the progenitor for my Richardson line, and his wife could be Richardson00002, their children Richardson00003, Richardson00004, etc. down to me, my sister and cousins. Or, perhaps you want to denote those people who you have floating in your database who could potentially tie in. You could have something such as: Lukens-PA Possible or Lukens-PA? etc. the choice is entirely yours.

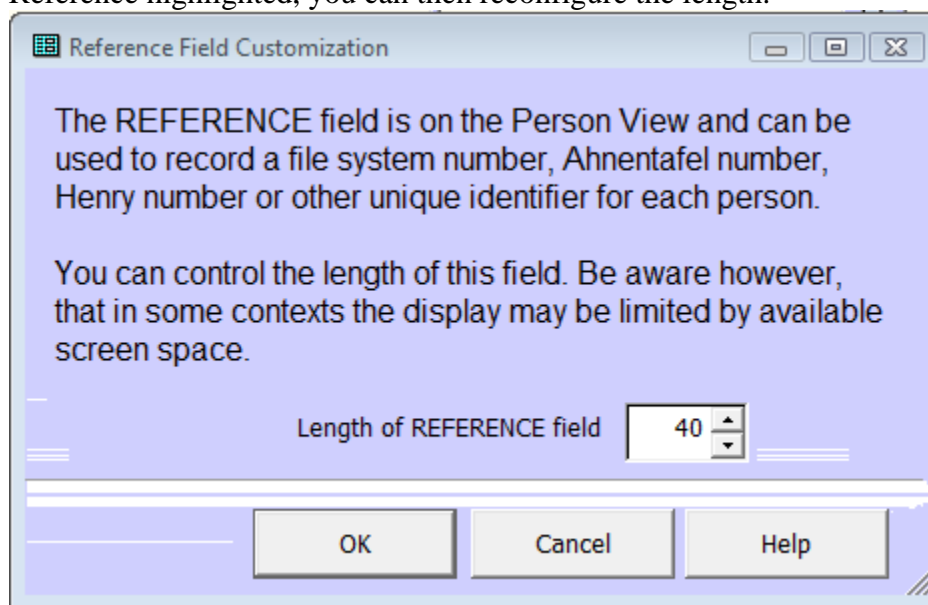
So, how do you get to the customization aspects of the reference field? The easy way is to hover your mouse over the reference field and right click. This brings up a menu which looks like this:



Click on the "Customize 'Other info' Box". You should then see a window like this:

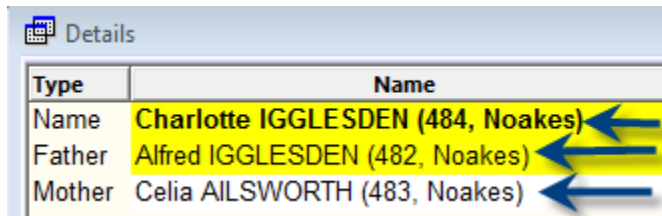


Here is where you can decide which of the preconfigured tags you want to display (or not), and where you change the length of the field. By clicking on the Customize button when you have Reference highlighted, you can then reconfigure the length.

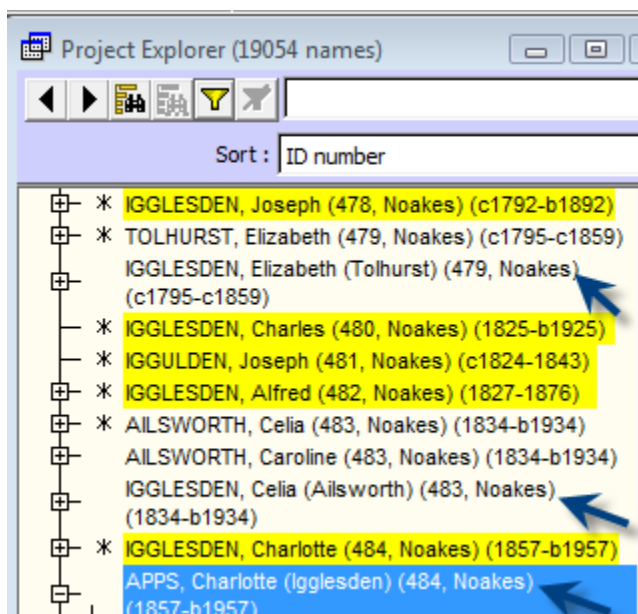


As you can see, I have changed mine from the default to 40 characters. Also note the “warning” that you may not be able to see all the characters if you change the length. The field limit is 250 characters.

Now you have accomplished making the field the length you desire. But what about displaying the information that you decide to place in there? This is a nifty little trick that I discovered about 2 weeks ago. Not only can you display the ID number on the picklists, the project explorer and in the name box, but you can also show the reference!

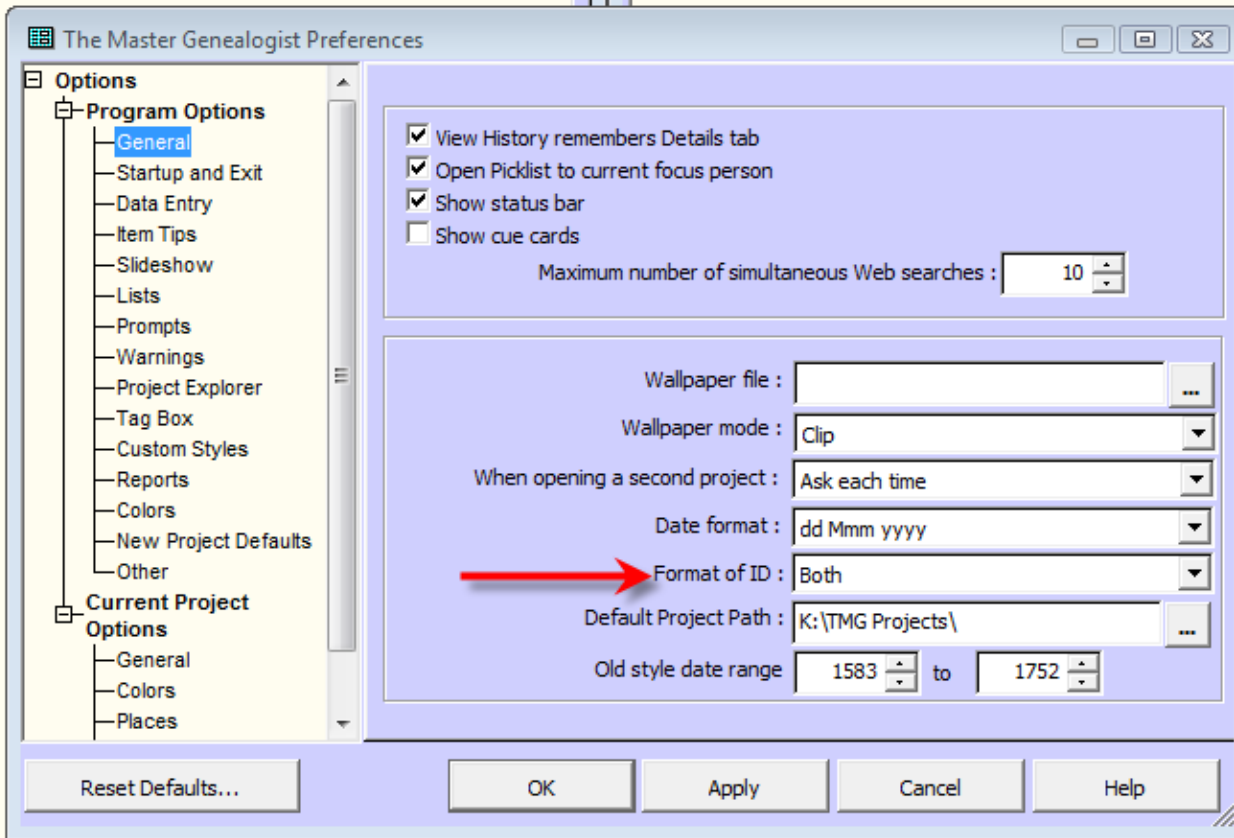


Type	Name
Name	Charlotte IGGLESDEN (484, Noakes)
Father	Alfred IGGLESDEN (482, Noakes)
Mother	Celia AILSWORTH (483, Noakes)



Project Explorer (19054 names)	
Sort : ID number	
* IGGLESDEN, Joseph (478, Noakes) (c1792-b1892)	
* TOLHURST, Elizabeth (479, Noakes) (c1795-c1859)	
IGGLESDEN, Elizabeth (Tolhurst) (479, Noakes) (c1795-c1859)	
* IGGLESDEN, Charles (480, Noakes) (1825-b1925)	
* IGGULDEN, Joseph (481, Noakes) (c1824-1843)	
* IGGLESDEN, Alfred (482, Noakes) (1827-1876)	
* AILSWORTH, Celia (483, Noakes) (1834-b1934)	
AILSWORTH, Caroline (483, Noakes) (1834-b1934)	
IGGLESDEN, Celia (Ailsworth) (483, Noakes) (1834-b1934)	
* IGGLESDEN, Charlotte (484, Noakes) (1857-b1957)	
APPS, Charlotte (Igglesden) (484, Noakes) (1857-b1957)	

This change is accomplished by going into File>Preferences>Program Options>General>Format of ID, and changing it to “Both”.



What this does for me is now when I am tracking way off path and getting interested in some far-flung relative, I can look at the name and know at a glance which line they are a part of. As I stated before, both accents and flags can also accomplish this. As you can see from the examples above, I do utilize the accents for that very purpose. For me, this is a much quicker check to find out which line someone such as Elizabeth Tolhurst (shown above in the picklist page shot), whom I have in my data, but I haven't dealt with, belongs to.