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Learn Then Do

In July, my opening remarks were entitled, "Continuing Education" and I am still thinking about that subject. I cannot imagine life without stimuli for new thoughts or expanded perspective; in other words, a life without learning.

Adults generally study and learn new skills in order to reach a goal. Desire is another key element in the learning process because it helps us overcome obstacles and setbacks. I recently listened to a *Today Show* interview with first-time author, David Wroblewski. He had a story to share but knew he didn't have the necessary writing skills. As a computer software designer he knew that when you want to do something big, "you can do it by doing it in successive drafts. You don't have to do it all in one shot." He began by taking writing classes. Ten years and twelve drafts later, *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle: A Novel* appears on the best seller's list.

David Wroblewski is a wonderful example of coupling desire with learning a new skill to fulfill his aspirations. Many of you have goals for your family history but feel you do not have the necessary skills. If you truly have the desire, begin developing the skills. Start down the path and see what you can accomplish. Read the article on [Blogs, Podcasts and Vlogs](#) then go exploring. You may find just what you need to help you fulfill your dreams.

~ Cina Johnson ~

Insights into Insight: Developing FamilyInsight

For over a year, we have been talking about FamilyInsight, testing it and preparing for its release. I have great admiration for John, Paula, Dave and Jake whose inspiration and fortitude will bring this update to pass. I thought you would appreciate a tiny glimpse at the process for creating this new software. It, too, is a big project getting done in series of "successive drafts".

Initially, FamilySearch invited us and some other vendors to make software that would synchronize with their new website. They shared technical details necessary for us to begin making FamilyInsight talk to the FamilySearch server. Since FamilySearch family tree undergoes quarterly updates, writing our code to work with it has been compared to a hunter trying to hit a fast-moving target. To facilitate the process, FamilySearch created a special website for the vendors to test their programs and held weekly conferences to discuss issues and agree upon solutions.

There are a lot of ancillary details related to releasing new software, such as names, logos, and how the user will work with the program. During these early stages, we tossed out ideas for the program's new name and settled on FamilyInsight. In about August or September of 2007, Diana and I had our first glimpse into how two-way synchronization might work. John asked for our opinions and we gave him suggestions based on our personal preferences and on what we thought YOU, the customers, would like. We tried to head off support issues from the start.

In October, we got our first test product. We were expected to use the new features and report problems. The funny thing about software bugs is, the program may work perfectly on one computer and set off bells and whistles on another. One of our first bugs triggered an alarm that sounded like we'd won a million dollars from a slot machine in Las Vegas.

When we find a bug we have to try and duplicate it and that can be tricky. Some bugs only come out when you have certain preference settings. Subtle problems take persistent study to finally see the cause and affect. Some bugs muddy the water because they come in conjunction with another bug. Poor John and Paula have to try and make sense of our reports so they can begin fixing the problems. One time John called me to clarify the steps that triggered a crash of FamilyInsight. As I walked through the process he said, "Oh, that's two bugs. One, it shouldn't search that way and two, it should respond differently to this search failure. Please write it up as two bugs."

Periodically, FamilySearch opens a test website for a select group of beta testers. During those brief periods, we have about 20 people test FamilyInsight in this "playground". Using this site is fun because you can do outrageous things without worrying that you will mess something up. The testers send us reports on the bugs they find and they give us feedback on what they like and don't like. Noelani tries to replicate the bugs, then writes up a report. She also adds the tester's ideas to a wish list so the programmers can evaluate and prioritize their projects. We appreciate their insights because they help us make FamilyInsight easier to use.

During the late winter or early spring we found a big problem with the way FamilyInsight searched for matches. Back to the drawing board. After spending a few weeks solely focused on improving the search capabilities, John and his team significantly improved search speeds and quality. Quality searching is a key factor in finding records, so this was a major feat. At about this same time, John and Paul were inspired on how to make separating records easy. You see, development is fluid and one breakthrough can lead to exciting new ideas and features.

Late June and early July brought a flurry of activity as we focused on becoming certified by FamilySearch. Andrea began developing a new logo and desktop icon for both Family Insight and Get My Ancestors. I started working on lessons. Noe continued finding, replicating and writing up bug reports. Without complaint, Diana handled the phones and emails almost single handedly for several weeks. We had multiple new versions of both Get My Ancestors and Family Insight to test; some days we had a new version before we had even tested the previous one. We wrote bug reports, sent instant messages, uploaded files, and the programmers pulled all‐nighters.

At long last, the closed beta test began a few weeks ago. A closed beta is a testing period using a select group of testers. Over the weeks, we have added a few additional testers and will continue to do so until we feel certain that both the Mac and the Windows version are working well. These testers are doing a great job of finding and reporting problems; offering suggestions; and giving praise when praise is due. Their encouragement brightens our days. Their ideas also greatly improve the program.

There are still some problems to solve but one of these days, you will get an announcement that FamilyInsight is starting an open beta. That means, anyone that wants to use try the beta version, may. The final release follows shortly thereafter. Until that day, please know that although John, Paula, Dave, Jake and Andrea live in Paradise, they are hard at work in our behalf.

Spotlight on: Blogs, Podcasts and Vlogs

Blog: Web log; Web journal; Internet soapbox

Podcast: Digitized audio broadcast that you access from your computer or download onto an iPod

Vlog: Video blog

All of the above: Helpful learning tools

If you have never taken the time to investigate blogs, podcasts and vlogs, get a glass of water and a snack, and prepare of a great time in cyberspace.

For simplicity sake, I will use the term blog but the comments generally fit all three categories. Basically, anyone or any company can create their own blog to express their opinions, share their knowledge or promote a product or idea. In the "olden days", people went to a busy street corner and stood on a soapbox or wandered the streets wearing a placard to express their opinions. Today we can go online, create a blog, and speak to the world!

Once you are comfortably settled at your computer and ready for your adventure, get onto the Internet and use Google, Yahoo or other search engine and enter "blogs genealogy" (without the quotation marks). That's all it takes. I found three websites that specialize in indexing genealogy blogs. These sites all had links to blogs for beginning research, states or countries, ethnic groups, and photography preservation or scrapbooking. Other categories included cemetery research, heraldry, reunions, etc. One of these three websites provided a [blog on blogs](#) that was particularly helpful.

As you peruse the list of topics, click on one that interests you. From the [Genealogy Blog Finder](#) website, I choose "Preservation Blogs". This page contained titles of several blogs from which I selected, "The Practical Archivist". This particular article reviewed several "How to" books on dating old photos and was exactly what I need for a personal project. The end of the article had links to related topics, such as tips for preserving photos, what photos to keep and what to toss, etc. More of what I need.

In your explorations you may find a blogger (blog author) that you particularly enjoy; bookmark the page so you can find it again. (Learn to create bookmarks by [clicking here](#) and reading the May 2008 issue of Ohana Insights. If you read the tutorial mentioned above, you will also learn how to subscribe to specific blogs.

Some bloggers include podcasts from interviews and lectures they give. Others create video training sessions and post them on their blog. These video blogs became known as vlogs. Bloggers generally have a specific topic they write about (genealogy, politics, underwater basket weaving) but they may also branch into related topics (family relations, history, art). Some update their postings on a regular basis while others are sporadic. Blogs, podcasts and vlogs are as varied as each individual but they can be fun and educational and just the ticket to adventure that you need.

Odds and Ends

Get My Ancestors: The latest version of Get My Ancestors is 2008.9.10.1. You may update the program by downloading it from our website at www.ohanasoftware.com.

License Agreement: Our license agreement allows you to install PAF Insight/FamilyInsight and Get My Ancestors onto all your household computers. We also allow you to get any updates to PAF Insight/FamilyInsight for one year from the date of purchase. At the end of your free update period, you may continue to use Insight "as is" or purchase an update license for an additional year of updates. If you

have EVER purchased PAF Insight, you qualify for an update license.

The first time you open PAF Insight after we release FamilyInsight, you will get a message that an update is available. If the update part of your license has expired, you will be given the option to purchase an update license. If you have a current license, you will be able to proceed with the installation without interruption.

CALENDAR

Mesa Arizona Family History Expo 2008

November 14-15, 2008

Mesa Convention Center - 263 N Center St, Mesa, Arizona

John Vilburn will be teaching FamilyInsight classes

Learn more: [Click here](#)

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