

The C&D McLean project & website

Notes for a talk – by Don Gordon

Version 2 - March 2017

TNG website www.christinaandonaldmclean.com

Opening questions

Ask the audience (for quick responses)

- How are you sharing what you have discovered?
- Who is writing a book on their family history?
- Who is using a genealogical program – just on your computer (eg Legacy) or on-line (eg ancestry.com or My Heritage)?
- Who has their own website?

Our starting point

We are fortunate in already having lots of information about our McLeans in the form of a big red book (BRB) about the descendants of Christina and Donald. With ten children, they came out from Argyllshire to South Australia in 1837. In Adelaide, they produced the first wheat crop in the colony and then became pioneers in Strathalbyn. The BRB was published in 1995 – with 700 copies. It has about 7,500 people - including 230 biographies and 650 photos. So we are most interested in how to share this rather than focussing only on gathering new details.

Book Vs internet

At first we thought about re-printing the BRB as it is - but it would have been outdated because many people had died or been born in the two decades since it was first published. So we wondered about an updated version or supplement – but that would have been too big since it was already 850 pages. With a large book of family history, most of it is of little interest to most people who really want to see the pages about their own family line rather than very remote cousins. So we decided to put it on the internet which would make it accessible to more people and also make it possible to easily update. People can then get the best of both worlds – they can get up-to-date details which are relevant to themselves and can print out whatever they want in order to compile their own book. We can even provide professional looking covers because there is great satisfaction in thumbing through an attractive presentation of the stories, photos and details of your own family history – rather than looking at a computer screen.

Which software?

I had used Legacy which was good as a genealogical program but was not good as a website. After looking at a few possibilities we settled on TNG – The Next Generation of Genealogical Sitebuilding. The data entry and profiles work quite well, but does not have some of the features which Legacy, RootsMagic, MyHeritage and many other genealogical programs. Some people get the best of both worlds by using these other programs for entering and then periodically GEDCOM this into TNG.

Costs

TNG = \$44, Domain = \$34 for 2 years, File Zilla FTP = \$free, notepad++ PHP editor = free, Simply Hosting per month = \$7 to \$33 (depending on the size of memory). So it is just \$44 for TNG and then between \$100 or \$400 each year to keep it going.

Technical support

The TNG website can be set up by anyone - with very little computer skills. There are 15 templates to choose for the home page from, but we wanted something quite different for our home page. We wanted a slide show, fewer tabs, better use of feature articles (enticers), and simple instructions for visitors to the website. But these modifications were beyond us. So we have tried to access help through:-

- TNG Wiki, TNG Forum and the support of Simply Hosting & FileZilla have all been helpful

- Surprisingly the software developer, Darrin Lythgoe, personally answers email questions.
- However, there is nothing better than sitting down with someone who really knows their way around websites and TNG in particular.
 - Unfortunately, there are very few TNG users in WA – there is no local TNG support group like there is for Legacy and there was for TMG. Anne Spiro is one of just a handful of TNG users we have managed to contact.
 - There are people in WAGS (eg Chris Loudon) who are happy to help although they have so specific experience with TNG.
 - In the absence of local specialist help, we have to ask friends and relatives.
 - We have also have got some assistance from a couple of people who have skills with websites generally, but had not come across TNG before – we pay them \$65/per to teach us, rather than do it for us.

Our starting point

- We are fortunate in already having lots of information about our McLeans in the form of a big red book (BRB) about the descendants of Christina and Donald. With ten children, they came out from Argyllshire to South Australia in 1837. In Adelaide, they produced the first wheat crop in the colony and then became pioneers in Strathalbyn. The BRB was published in 1995 – with 700 copies. It has about 7,500 people - including 230 biographies and 650 photos. So we are most interested in how to share this rather than focussing only on gathering new details.

What we are aiming for

- For descendants of Donald & Christina to become aware of their shared family history
- Connections with remote cousins – maybe re-unions
- Platform for more – the go-to place for our McLeans
- Quality – accuracy, completeness, non-repetitious, privacy, copyright, sources, conventions xxxxx

Decisions we made:-

- A group project: Right from the start, this was to be a shared effort rather than one person's possession. It is not owned by an individual. ~~where others are welcome to look and to contribute,~~ In 1885??? it was The Donald & Christina Genealogical Council Inc but that ceased to function in 1998?? after it had produced the BRB. Rather than re-establishing this council, with all the obligations of running a separate organization ourselves which might eventually become defunct again, we decided to link ourselves with the Strathalbyn Museum. We formed a Steering Group to get things going. We have a network of over 60 people who have an interest in this project. Next year we will elect a formal sub-committee under the Strathalbyn Museum.
- Book Vs internet: At first we thought about re-printing the BRB as it is - but it would have been outdated because many people had died or been born in the two decades since it was first published. So we wondered about an updated version or supplement – but that would have been too big since it was already 850 pages. With a large book of family history, most of it is of little interest to most people who really want to see the pages about their own family line rather than very remote cousins. So we decided to put it on the internet which would make it accessible to more people and also make it possible to easily update. People can then get the best of both worlds – they can get up-to-date details which are relevant to themselves and can print out whatever they want in order to compile their own book. We can even provide professional looking covers because there is great satisfaction in thumbing through an attractive presentation of the stories, photos and details of your own family history – rather than looking at a computer screen.
- Which software? I had used Legacy which was good as a genealogical program but was not good as a website. After looking at a few possibilities we settled on TNG – The Next Generation of Genealogical Sitebuilding. The data entry and profiles work quite well, but does not have some of the features which Legacy, RootsMagic, MyHeritage and many other genealogical programs. Some people get the best of both worlds by entering using these other programs and then periodically GEDCOM this into TNG.

- Costs: TNG = \$44, Domain = \$34 for 2 years, File Zilla FTP = \$free, Simply Hosting per month = \$7 to \$33 (depending on the size of memory). So it is just \$44 to set up and between \$100 or \$400 each year to keep it going.
- Copyright: The BRB was published by a committee which had ceased to function but we managed to have the copyright taken over by the National Trust of South Australia – specifically their Strathalbyn branch.
- Privacy: Has become a greater issue in the decades since the BRB book was published. For example it included the birth dates and some other details of living people but this is not acceptable to genealogical organisations now-a-days. So after some agonizing, we decided that we would only show the initials. There were three privacy options on TNG – show all, don't show anything, or show surname and initials of the first names (eg AG Smith). It was useless to not show anything – lists of people just called 'Living' whereas the surname seemed too revealing (eg it could indicate who you married). So we created an in-between option – all initials (eg AGS). People can consent to show their full name, or any other specific details by a simple procedure – (a) they request a copy of whatever we have about them of the database, (b) they specify what details they are happy for the public to see, and (c) we make the necessary adjustments to the database, and (d) from then on, we will not add anything to their profile unless they give further consent.
- Focus: Genealogies can spread out as they take on the ancestors and descendants of people who have married into the main blood line. It is difficult for visitors to the website to see what the website about. In our case we decided it should be about the direct ancestors and descendants of Donald & Christina – and limited details about individual who have married in. If someone wants to record a lot about their own kin who have married in, we will show them how they can start their own website. For example, I have started a website for the Gordons because my father married a McLean.
- Technical support: The TNG website can be set up by anyone - with very little computer skills. There are 15 templates to choose for the home page from, but we wanted something quite different for our home page. We wanted a slide show, fewer tabs, better use of feature articles (enticers), and simple instructions for visitors to the website. But these modifications were beyond us. TNG Wiki and the TNG Forum have been helpful, and surprisingly the software developer, Darrin Lythgoe, personally answers email questions. However, there is nothing better than sitting down with someone who really knows their way around websites and TNG in particular. Unfortunately, there are very few TNG users in WA – there is no local TNG support group like there is for Legacy and there was for TMG. Anne Spiro is one of just a handful of TNG users we have managed to contact. There are people in WAGS (eg xxx) who are happy to help although they have so specific experience with TNG. In the absence of local specialist help, we have to ask friends and relatives. We have also have got some assistance from a couple of people who have skills with websites generally, but had not come across TNG before – we pay them \$65/per to teach us, rather than do it for us.
- Connecting with living people: We did not want to just make a record of our ancestors. We want to reach out to the present generations. There might be as many as 5000 living descendants of Christina and Donald – obviously many of them are not interested in this part of their background – but we want to make contact with those who are already interested – and whet the appetite of some others. How can we make contact?
 - Word of mouth
 - Ancestry etc
 - Advertising (launch)
 - Google
 - Making it easy
 - Making it a positive experience.

What we have done so far

- Network & Steering Group
- Inputted it all
- New stories/article
- New details have started
- Fishing – Many people are not terribly interested in their family history beyond having a general idea of their own background and a few specifics about their great grandparents and a few of their many cousins. On the other hand, in most extended families there is one (we think maybe one in fifty) who

is keen to discover every bit of information that he/she can gather. These are the descendants we are trying to contact because hopefully, they will spread the word to the own kinship circle. Of these:-

- Some will be just pleased that we have provided so much information in a readily accessible form.
- Some will want to do their own thing – like stamp collectors or bird-watchers. They will still want to compile their own version of the family tree, even though another already exists. And of these, rather than have a stand-alone website such as ours, they utilize ancestry.com, My Heritage, RootsMagic or many other programs.
- It's like fishing – you spread the burley, entice them to nibble, not pull in too quickly when they are beginning to get hooked, give them some line if they are heading in another direction, then hauling them in once you are sure they are hooked. The land them. Many will circle around, but not take the bait. Not to load them with too much initially. Cautiously building a relationship. Trust and understanding each other's interests and how much they want to commit.
- Chanced upon our site by googling the name of one of tier ancestors – about 10 so far who have contacted us)
- We have initiated contact after seeing that they are on ancestry etc - exploring part of your family tree - about 20
- Work of mouth amongst relatives – about 10.
- Often we get no reply.

Where to now? (tasks ahead):-

- Endorsement from the Strath Museum
- Connections – fishing
- Working towards the 'launch'
- Official committee