Learning from e-family history: online research behaviour and strategies of family historians and implications for local studies collections.

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 preaware 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.

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Theses (Information management)
900 people who had researched their family. The online Family History Library Catalog is a window to the two million plus records (print and microfilm) which the Family History Library maintains in its collection. For those of us around the world who can't easily make it to Salt Lake City, UT, it is absolutely invaluable both as an avenue for research and as a learning tool. Practice using the different searches and play around with different techniques and you may find yourself amazed at the things you find.