



## Savings that really add up

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**C**razy economic times call for innovative solutions for feeding the genealogy bug. Most of 2008 saw U.S. gas prices in the \$3–4 a gallon range, possibly keeping many researchers from venturing out on road trips. During the last two months of the year, gas prices plummeted, but that happened when the economy was officially declared in a “recession.” So while there’s more for gas money, your investments may have taken a nosedive. This past week, gas prices have jumped up again in 15-cent increments, returning to \$2 a gallon. What’s a genealogist to do?

*Digital Genealogist* authors are always on the lookout for ways to help you accomplish your research tasks using technology, which often translates to saving you money (but not always!). Within this very issue, you can find out how to become a virtual volunteer (saving gas money); find out about the various data projects available online (saving research time and money); learn how to reduce your carbon footprint by using less paper (saving money); find out how to future proof your data (saving time, effort, and money); or find research assistance on wikis (saving time and money).

Technology solutions are terrific, but sometimes in order to accomplish your research goals you need to return to the low-tech basics, whether or not you ever did research the old-fashioned way. If money is an issue but you need to do research, consider driving over to your local public library. There are so many opportunities available to you at public libraries, from free access to some subscription databases such as [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), to expert assistance searching for information from professionally trained librarians, to a nationwide (at least in the U.S.) system of interlibrary loan.

Or how about the postal system? While prices have been rising there too, a first-class letter in the U.S. is still only 42 cents. Back in the day [pre-Internet], sending a request letter to a repository, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE), often elicited hoped-for responses and copies of important documents. Even though we’re in the technology age, there are still many repositories that will not accept e-mail requests for assistance or photocopies. Sure, let your fingers do the walking on your keyboard to find the repository and its address, then write out your request, fold it up, put it in an envelope with an SASE, and stick a stamp on it. The postal service will be happy to have the business.

Be creative and innovative with your approach to research. Can’t make it to the major genealogy conferences? Why not purchase the syllabus on CD for a fraction of the cost? Look over the syllabus and order CDs of the speakers with topics you need to learn about. You may miss some of the fun and camaraderie of the conferences, but you will have the learning tools at your fingertips. Don’t let a recession get in the way of your avocation.

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looks very impressive. It was so easy to use—clear, concise, and fun. I enjoyed playing around with it and I believe it is going to make a nice addition to the genealogy world online.

These projects don't happen by themselves. Each takes dedicated volunteers working a little or a lot to get data, photos, indexes, and more on the Web for all of us to use. Because you are volunteering, you can define for yourself what you are able to do in an acceptable amount of time for your schedule and limit yourself to that. Volunteering does not have to be taxing on your schedule. With these simple volunteering suggestions, you can make a difference in someone else's research and still have time for your own. Helping other researchers with their long-distance genealogy is very important and fulfilling.

If it hadn't been for someone else somewhere else volunteering their time, your research would probably not be where it is today. Think about returning the favor by giving back to the genealogy world through indexing, transcribing, or doing look-ups. **DG**

1. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "[Economic News Release, Volunteering in the United States, 2007](#)," Website accessed 13 September 2008.



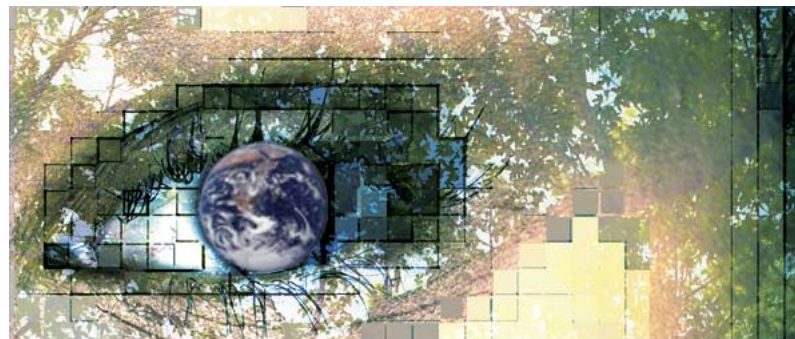
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## Editor

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## Some changes

You may have noticed there is no Mac genie column in this issue. Laura Prescott has been writing about Macs and genealogy for many years, both since the inception of *Digital Genealogist* and until the demise of *Genealogical Computing*. She's moving on from her column, but will continue to write for *DG* from time to time. Next issue, Josh Taylor will take over the Mac column, moving away from his essential technologies offerings. Thomas MacEntee will begin a new column on tech issues, along the lines of his article in this issue on future proofing your data. **DG**



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