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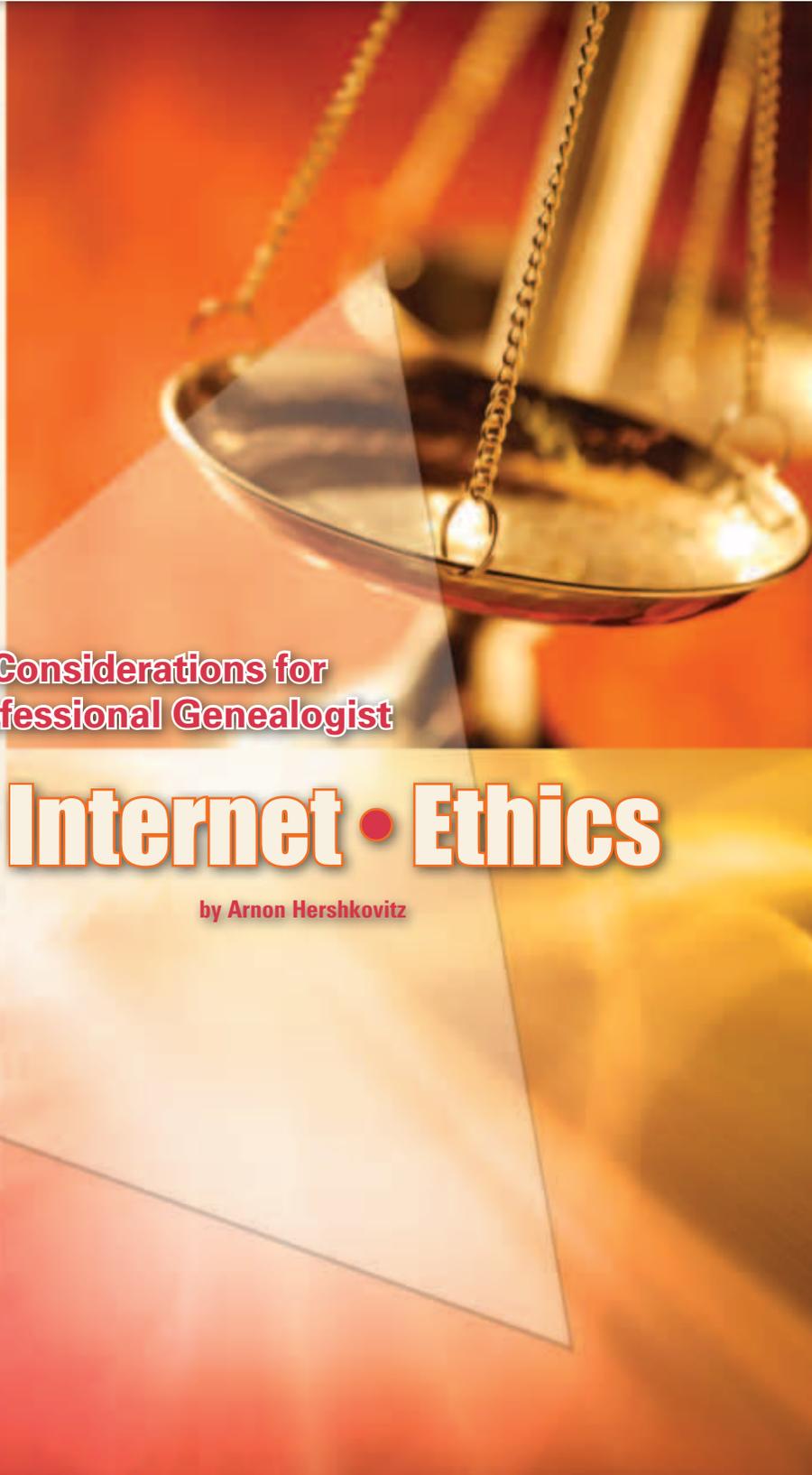
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**Ethical Considerations for
Today's Professional Genealogist**

Genealogy • Internet • Ethics

by Arnon Hershkovitz



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Introduction

Albert Einstein once said, "Relativity applies to physics, not ethics." One thing is certain, ethics is not as objective nor as precise as physics. As ethical guidelines for a highly complex field like genealogy cannot be specifically and accurately defined, they are often based on *general* recommendations which are presumably applicable to *any* situation. Therefore, as has been previously suggested, ethical violations while practicing genealogy might be much more common than expected.¹

The Internet, and in particular the World Wide Web (WWW),² has raised many critical ethical discussions over the years. Guidelines for using the Internet ethically were formally suggested by the Internet Architecture Board (IAB) back in 1989,³ and have been continuously discussed ever since. That is to say, anyone who practices a certain profession by using the Internet is subject to the ethical limitations of both his or her profession and the Internet. As the Internet is today a working genealogist's tool par excellence, professional genealogists should not only bind themselves to a genealogical code of ethics, but also to the Internet one.

This article discusses the ethical considerations which professionals should take into account while practicing Internet-based genealogy.

First, we will examine the three sides of the triangle, Genealogy-Internet-Ethics, then we will look at a few working cases that highlight the potential problems within this triangle.

1. Three Sides of the Genealogy-Internet-Ethics Triangle

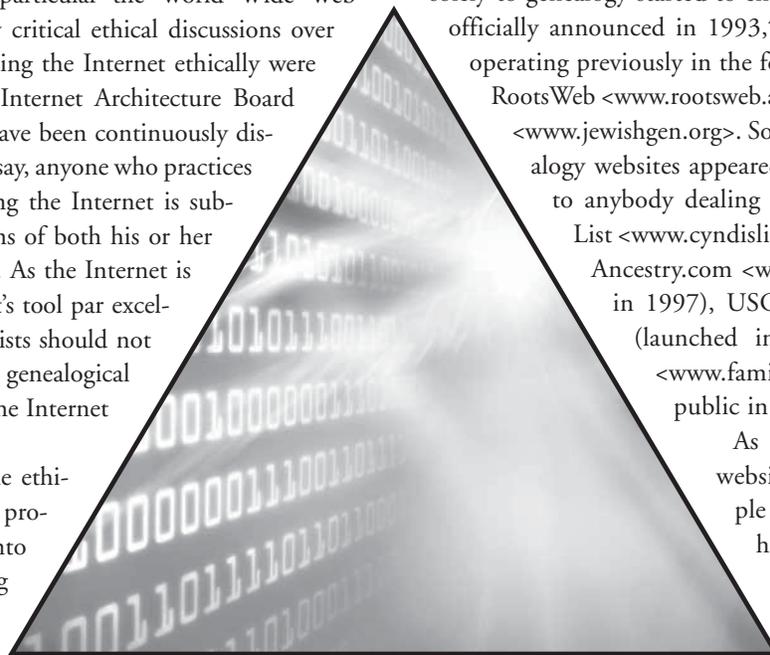
To fully understand whether or not Internet-based research brings new ethical challenges for the professional genealogist, it is important to first break this Genealogy-Internet-Ethics triangle into its sides, and to discuss each of them.

1.1. Genealogy and the Internet

Since its inception, the Internet has changed the way people do genealogy. E-mail communication made it so much easier to correspond with family, potential relatives, colleagues, and institutions (e.g., archives, libraries) compared to traditional snail mail. Internet directories brought new information in an easy-to-find way, and later, search engines helped us find information we did not even know we were looking for. Websites dedicated solely to genealogy started to emerge as soon as the Web was officially announced in 1993,⁴ as some of them had been operating previously in the form of discussion boards like RootsWeb <www.rootsweb.ancestry.com>, and JewishGen <www.jewishgen.org>. Soon after that, many new genealogy websites appeared, some of which are known to anybody dealing with genealogy, like Cindy's List <www.cyndislist.com> (launched in 1996), Ancestry.com <www.ancestry.com> (launched in 1997), USGenNet <www.usgenet.org> (launched in 1998), and FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org> (opened to the public in 1999).

As Internet access grew, these websites had a huge effect on people all over the world who finally had an easier way to begin the search for their ancestors.

Like a snowball rolling down a hill, more genealogy websites sprang up, and more people were brought into the genealogy research world. Today, almost 2 billion people around the world use the Internet.⁵ Hundreds of thousands of people are interested in their family history⁶ and, considering the huge number of online resources for genealogy, the connection between genealogy and the Internet is cemented. Social networking websites like Facebook <www.facebook.com>, which have become highly popular in recent years, have made these possible connections even stronger.⁷



It is, therefore, a truth that one *cannot* practically practice genealogy in today's world without using the Internet. Furthermore, genealogy on the Internet today is not only about individuals researching their families, but also about learning,⁸ communicating with peers,⁹ sharing information, and collaborating to create new resources.

With so many kinds of materials available to genealogists, they are faced with two relatively new issues: the requirement to critically evaluate online resources, and the basic requirement that researchers have, as part of the Internet community, to use and share materials based on mostly unwritten guidelines.

1.2. Ethics in Professional Genealogy

There is no Hippocratic Oath for genealogists, but rather dozens of Codes of Ethics from organizations of hobbyist or professional genealogists. Furthermore, as genealogy has no one code of conduct with which ethical limits might be gauged, the existing codes of ethics relate only to the very common-sense basics of research. In practice, almost every professional genealogist, as was clearly stated by Thomas W. Jones in *APGQ* XXIII, No. 3 (Sept. 2008), is “susceptible to ethical lapses, despite having signed one or more codes of ethics... [they] might transgress accidentally, without recognizing a problem... [or] bypass ethics to meet a deadline, economize, or fill a client request.”¹⁰

Jones' solution to this crucial problem includes two main components: (1) Studying of the subtleties of the codes (beyond just knowing them) by learning from other peoples' mistakes and/or by attending regular refresher classes; and (2) having one's work reviewed either by colleagues or by other professionals (the former is a common practice for teams working together, the latter is possible when submitting research outcomes for publication).

It is important to emphasize that the Internet may be of help with finding solutions to the ethics-in-genealogy problem, in the spirit of Jones' suggestions. One might think of constructing an online resource for ethics in genealogy, in which professionals (and hobbyists as well) could meet for ethics classes and case-studies on a regular basis, and in which they would be able to discuss ethical dilemmas.

1.3. Internet Ethics (aka: Netiquette)

According to the legal doctrine in many countries, *Ignorantia juris non excusat*, (ignorance of the law does not excuse). Applying this principle to Internet ethics, one can say that ignorance of ethical Internet principles is not an excuse. But, here is the main point: Are there any guidelines at all for Internet ethics? The answer is simply, “Yes, and no.”

Terms of Use and Privacy Policies form a de facto rule-system for using most of the popular Internet websites. It is either mandatory (by the country laws) for a website to have policies avail-

able (e.g., in the EU), or it is done voluntarily when the law does not require it (in order to demonstrate a self-regulatory market, e.g., in the USA). From the guidelines outlined in such statements, one can sometimes extract a few basic ethical principles; however, they will probably be limited to the crucial topics raised by the website owners, and not necessarily to the fundamental issues of using it.

At a higher-level, communication on the Internet is not free of ethical guidelines. It was about a decade before the formation of the World Wide Web that the term *netiquette* (as a portmanteau of “network etiquette”) was coined, in the context of posting in Usenet newsgroups,¹¹ but the first official netiquette document is the one published by IETF¹² in 1995, and is known as “RFC 1855.” That document provides “a minimum set of guidelines for Network Etiquette (Netiquette) which organizations may take and adapt to their own needs.” After sketching the guidelines for one-to-one communication and one-to-many communication, the document discusses information services. This section, which is still relevant to the scope of our article, recommends a very cautious approach, and states as follows: “Although the ability to find information is exploding, ‘Caveat Emptor’ remains constant.” This is to say, according to the very first netiquette, each side of the information equation—and, in particular, the information consumer—should be careful in consuming it and using it.¹³

Regarding communication between Internet users, and although there is no consensus on netiquette, some characteristics are common across media and communities. An example to such a set of rules regarding Internet-based communication is given on the Microsoft <www.microsoft.com> website, entitled “Netiquette 101 for New Netizens: How to be on your best behavior when you go online” (netizens is again a portmanteau, this time for “net citizens”). In almost an Emily Post style, this document recommends the newbie to the Internet to “Apply the golden rule: Treat others the way you would like to be treated,” “Know where you are and use appropriate good behavior,” “Follow the same rules of good behavior that you would in real life,” and so on.¹⁴ These old-fashioned guidelines, which fit genealogy-originated communication well, demonstrate the difficulty in forming a set of domain-specific ethical guidelines.

To conclude this short review of the connections between genealogy, Internet, and ethics, we should remember that in the current era, genealogy and the Internet are inseparable for both the hobbyist and professionals. While using the Internet for genealogy research, communication, and information, one should always recall that both genealogy and Internet ethics are applicable. And, both are vague at best and non-existent at worst. Ethical guidelines for using the Internet by professional genealogists should be applicable to any site, and should not be controlled by the site owners, but rather by the genealogy community itself.

2. “New” Ethical Considerations? (four working cases examined)

In this section, I will discuss some related issues. Using working cases, we will demonstrate the complexity of defining ethical guidelines for professional Internet-based genealogy.

2.1. Using Public, Free Data (or: Pay Attention to the Terms of Use; JewishGen.org)

Founded in 1987, JewishGen <www.jewishgen.org> is the leading organization for promoting Jewish genealogical research. It is a non-profit organization that is based on the great work of hundreds of volunteers worldwide. At first, all it had was a Fidonet <www.fidonet.org> bulletin board, but as soon as the World Wide Web emerged, JewishGen was fully online, presenting a virtual place for people with Jewish roots to look for their past. As the site grew, it consisted of more and more tools for helping researchers to not only find information, but also to document, share, and collaboratively create it. Currently, JewishGen has thousands of pages, hundreds of databases with millions of records, and about 330,000 registered users.¹⁵ The whole site is free to use, but parts of it require registration, and some databases offer advanced search options only for users who have contributed to the JewishGen General Fund (usually a minimum of \$100). In August 2008, JewishGen aligned with Ancestry.com <www.ancestry.com>, suggesting most of JewishGen’s important databases may be included in Ancestry.com as part of that subscription.

JewishGen Family Finder (JGFF) <www.jewishgen.org/jgff> is unique among JewishGen’s databases. It is a simple and constantly updated table in which users are encouraged to enter their ancestral towns and families. Users can search JGFF for other people that are interested in the same surnames/towns as they are, often shortening the path to success. JGFF is one of JewishGen’s most visited databases, with about a half a million entries by almost 100,000 submitters and more than 10 million searches a year.¹⁶ JGFF offers its users an online form for contacting the persons who have common research interests, as most of the contact details are hidden for privacy purposes. JGFF is not included in JewishGen’s agreement with Ancestry.com.

The first step for a JewishGen user should certainly be searching JGFF. Often, this leads to the discovery of relatives with only a few clicks. It is only reasonable that a professional genealogist will also take this route for locating information about his clients’ (Jewish) families. But there is a disclaimer, located at the bottom of the main JGFF page (emphasis in original):

The information in this database is presented as a means to contact those listed herein solely for your own **personal** genealogical research and may not be used, without the prior written permission of JewishGen, Inc. for any other purpose including, but not limited to: solicitation of paid

research; school-related research projects or term papers; and interviews for purposes of publication.

According to this disclaimer, JGFF is out of scope for professionals, unless they use it for their own personal research. But wait, does that disclaimer hold only for JGFF? Well, not necessarily. In the Disclaimer, Site Use, and Privacy Policy, which disclose the dissemination practices for the entire site, a very similar warning appears (emphasis in original):

All information contained on this site is being provided by JewishGen, Inc. as a public service for the furtherance of your **personal** genealogical research.¹⁷

Well, that is strange. Remember that many of JewishGen’s databases are accessible via Ancestry.com. If we read Ancestry.com’s Terms and Conditions¹⁸ (updated 6 July 2009, after aligning with JewishGen), which apply for the whole site, we find this statement:

You are licensed to use the Content only for personal or professional family history research.

So, data from JewishGen, which is accessible via Ancestry.com, is okay to use for professional matters, but only if accessed via the latter. Data accessible only from JewishGen (e.g., JGFF) is prohibited for professional use. The problem is, how does one know if a certain database in JewishGen is accessible via Ancestry.com hence allowing bypassing the former’s limitation by the latter’s regulations?

Now, let us go one step further. Discussing the crucial question of when one knows that the search for answering a certain question should be altered. Thomas Jones suggested some criteria regarding the planning, implementing, and presenting of a genealogy research project. While implementing the research, Jones clearly suggests that generally more than one source should be taken into consideration. One test for stopping a search is when you find “Two or more independent sources in agreement.”¹⁹ According to the limitations of using JewishGen (regarding databases not accessible via Ancestry.com), is it ethical to consider it as a source for that stopping-test only, i.e., in case the information was found elsewhere, in another independent source? As with a few other questions to be presented in this article, this question will remain unanswered.

2.2. Automatic Relative Searching (or Un-hiding the Hidden; MyHeritage.com, Geni.com)

The Internet is a major catalyst of research processes, which previously could have lasted for years and now might be conducted in hours (e.g., searching texts from newspapers instead of browsing dozens and hundreds of issues or finding someone to look for you

locally in his place of residence overseas instead of travelling there). But more than that, the Internet offers some innovative research tools that enable success in ways not imaginable before. Automatic relative search is an excellent example of such novel tools.

Merging trees by finding matches between them is offered by several of today's largest genealogy-related Web services, including Geni <www.geni.com> (founded 2006), and MyHeritage <www.myheritage.com> (founded 2003). Both these sites serve as a kind of genealogical social network, enabling users to upload family trees and extend them in collaboration with other family members. The algorithms for merging/matching are, of course, complicated, but the underlying idea beneath them is quite straightforward: as the system stores dozens of millions of family trees, it may be possible to find certain branches, i.e., sub-trees, in more than one tree within the system that might fit with each other.

For example, let us consider the following situation. Two users, who happen to both be great-grandchildren of John Adamson—one a grandson of his son, David Adamson, and one a granddaughter of his daughter, Rebecca Moskowitz née Adamson—upload their family trees from John Adamson downwards. Both have all of John's children in the tree, but each has only a full descendant tree of his or her corresponding grandparent (David and Rebecca, respectively). Let us suppose that each of these users does not know about the other. While searching for matches among family trees in the system, it will detect a potential match between the above two trees, as both have John Adamson and his wife together with their children, and all the related names and dates correspond. Then, the system will send a message to both users letting them know about the potential connection. The users will carefully check the data, and upon deciding that this is indeed a match, they will merge their trees, and more important, they will be able to contact each other. A reunion just happened automatically!

This new kind of tool provides genealogists world-wide with hope for resolving long-time mysteries regarding lost branches of the family. And it does work; the author of this article (and many others) can testify to it.

Now, suppose you have a new client, and suppose you have tried everything you know for finding his or her lost branch of the family without success. Might it be nice to try the matching/merging tools as a last chance? If the desired reunion can happen thanks to the new technology, why shouldn't it be used? And if so, and considering that it often takes time—maybe days, weeks, or even months—until such a match/merge is found, why not to try it at the very first stages of the research?

In this case, a better understanding of the technology might shed light on one of the main problems of using it for professional research without taking a few precautionary steps. The issue here is that your client's right to privacy might be violated while

matching/merging occurs, or later on. As mentioned above, as soon as a match/merge is found, it is actually accessible also to the "other side." It might be that your client did not want the other side to know anything about them. For example, your clients were born to family X but were adopted at birth by family Y, and now they want to research about their biological family X, while other descendants of that family do not know anything about their "missing" branch). More than that, once they know about your clients, they might save that information in their database and use it for future matching/merging, hence potentially expanding the visibility of that information.

So, where does the border fall between utilizing the new technology and keeping the right to privacy of our clients?

2.3. Completing Missing Information (or: Who is the Audience for All This Information?; Facebook.com)

In recent years, Social Networking Sites (SNS)—e.g., MySpace <www.myspace.com>, Facebook <www.facebook.com>, LinkedIn <www.linkedin.com>, Twitter <www.twitter.com>, Flickr <www.flickr.com>, YouTube <www.youtube.com>, and Delicious <www.delicious.com>²⁰—have changed the way people communicate. Right now, Facebook is the leading force in the social networking arena with 400 million active users from more than 180 countries.²¹ This site has been recently ranked as the second most popular site in the world by Alexa's ranking,²² and on 13 March 2010 it became the most visited website in the United States.²³ This is to say, about twenty-two percent of the world Internet users,²⁴ and almost six percent of the world population,²⁵ are active on Facebook, and there are representatives from more than ninety-two percent of the world's countries.²⁶ Furthermore, as the site's statistics reveal, the average user of Facebook has 130 friends on the site, spends almost an hour per day on the site, and creates seventy pieces of content each month (Web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc.).²⁷ To put it simply, Facebook is not just a site to be registered with—it is clear that its users are active within it on a daily basis. So, if *everybody* is on Facebook, "doing" many things, obviously, you should be there too, and not only for communicating about your personal life, since Facebook can also be a great and useful genealogical tool.²⁸

With Facebook, you might be able to track down descendants of lost branches from your cases. Furthermore, you can fill the gaps in your research with first-hand information, such as birth dates, marriage status (and dates), family connections, work history, full contact information, and much more. If that is not enough, you will often find yourself with the option of enriching your family tree and summary report with pictures, taken directly from other users' online albums. It is true that many SNS users give limited access to not-connected users (i.e., users with whom they are not "friends" within the site), but some of the information might be visible, and even if not, just ask-

ing for friendship might work, as many users are not so picky about choosing their online friends. “Well,” the self-justifying professional will tell himself (and maybe to his colleagues and/or clients), “this information is out there to use. If that user did not want me to see his picture, he should not have uploaded it in first place.” This excuse could even be used for other types of sites, like blogs, to which non-restricted access is given to all.

But, is such rationalization appropriate?

2.4. Get Immediate Help (or: Who Said Proper Disclosure?; Mailing Lists and Internet Forums)

Back in 1987, the Internet was mostly about text on green screens. The very concept of easily and instantly communicating with people around the world was a big idea in itself, and thousands of electronic mailing lists immediately popped-up. Originally distributed via e-mail and later on the Web, mailing lists (and their modern and advanced descendants, Internet forums) are an integral means of communication between peers these days. Do you have a question about self-gardening, Latin dancing, vegetarian recipes, public transportation, stamp collecting, or anything else? You will find at least one virtual stage on which you will be able to publicly ask it and let it be heard by dozens (or thousands) of people interested in the very same topic. One of them will have an answer. In most cases, many of them share their thoughts and ideas, and a fruitful discussion soon develops from which everybody learns something new.

Within genealogy, every possible topic and sub-topic might have been covered by a certain mailing list or an Internet forum (aka message board). The first genealogical mailing list was probably ROOTS-L, founded back in 1987. Currently, RootsWeb <www.rootsweb.ancestry.com> is probably the biggest genealogical mailing list provider with more than 30,000 mailing lists (e.g., TX-CEMETERY-RESEARCH, AUS-NEWSPAPERS-DIGITISATION-PROJECT, INDIAN-TRADERS), but many other websites also operate a few mailing lists or Internet forums.

Whether or not to publicize your business using a certain mailing list or an Internet forum (or any other similar website for that matter) is up to each list’s or forum’s terms of use. However, there is a borderline issue with these communication-based platforms. Most of them are free to use, and are being used by beginners, amateurs, novices, and experts, as well as professionals. To put it simply, if a professional genealogist gets to a dead-end during one of his client’s cases, he can always try to topple the brick wall by getting some free advice from other colleagues in a relevant mailing list (or Internet forum).

Here is the dilemma: If you do not tell these mailing list members you are a professional and this is a question relevant to one of your well-paying clients, you might delude them to think they are helping you with your own personal research. However, if you do disclose that the information is for client work, they might not help you with free tips.

To tell or not to tell? This is the big question.

3. Suggested Framework for Formulating Guidelines

As the above four working cases demonstrate, Internet-based professional genealogy raises some new ethical considerations. The new concerns are the result of the characteristics of the World Wide Web. Not only that its *scalability* is similar to nothing else we have ever known, its *availability* crosses geographical, political, and cultural borders. Even more than that, it presents new technologies. Referring to these three points only,²⁹ one might find himself walking on a seemingly new land, surrounded by an unfamiliar atmosphere with no recognizable set of rules. It is therefore a great challenge for our community to create a framework of ethical guidelines in this jungle.

While not attempting to suggest a full code of Internet ethics for professional genealogists, I feel that such a code should be written within the following framework, built upon a few high-level principles.

Real-life codes of ethics also apply online. Everyone must follow the relevant codes of ethics. Principles regarding confidentiality, proper credit, honesty, source citation, or privacy protection for example, are to be kept even when some or part of the research is done online.

Follow the websites’ terms of use. Terms of use, given for almost any website, form the ad-hoc legal framework of using the site, and as such must be obeyed. But more than that, terms of use often reveal the atmosphere in which a certain website is being offered, e.g., its purpose and proper use and its expected audience.

Respect the people behind the screens. There are always people behind the screens. Respect them. Manners are not only for the real-world, and virtual manners might be even more difficult to follow. Check out the behavior codes within virtual communities before using them.

Upload client data only after their formal consent. As demonstrated earlier in this article, uploading genealogy data might have far-reaching consequences in regards to people’s right to their privacy. Therefore, before uploading any personal or genealogical information, your clients should be informed with all the needed facts. For example what is the purpose of uploading the data? Where will the data be uploaded? Who will be exposed to it and how? Can the data be removed? What will happen with the data after the research case is closed? Such information is certainly not always easy to provide, hence one should consider if he is knowledgeable of all the details, and if his clients fully understand them.

Download data only from public spaces. The privacy-sensitive approach by Hoser and Nitschke³⁰ should be applied for

professional genealogy also, answering the question, Can I use data from a certain website without explicitly asking for permission? Their answer is, “The data someone posted [...] may be used in the context and by the audience he or she intended it for.”³¹ The intended audience is, according to the original writers, the community the user who uploaded the data joined, and it might be large and not personally known to the user. For example, data from e-mails might be used only by the sender and recipients (this is clear as e-mails may be compared to postcards: even if you find one, you should keep it unread). Blogs, on the other hand, openly published for the public (similar to a newspaper article), are available for anyone to use as long as the data is properly quoted and cited. In social networks, people present a lot of information, but it is intended for their network (i.e., people they choose to share data with). This means that if you are not in the network, the data is not intended for you, and therefore you cannot use it. This situation might be understood as information shared in a social gathering. But what about joining the network just for becoming a legitimate audience? In most cases this will not serve as a proper solution, as the network, and generally the community, is perceived to be private, as explained by Eysenbach and Till.³¹ The level of perceived privacy may be determined by discussing the following questions (and keep in mind the comparison to a gathering of people): Is it a closed group requiring registration? What is the membership size? What are the group norms?

Precisely understand who (or what) is the source of information. Every piece of information available online is the result of some process that is either human-motivated or machine-motivated. It is not always so easy to distinguish between these two. For example, many online searchable databases have a feature which summarizes information from a record before actually viewing it. This summary might be written in a free text form even if it was created by a machine, and it might be tempting to use it instead of deciphering the record yourself. Incorrect terminology is also a problem when it comes from the user. For example, it is not accurate to say “I have found this information on Google,” as Google is merely an index to millions of websites and each information should be attributed to the specific website from which it is taken. A post in a blog is always written by someone (or maybe more than one person), and therefore not to be treated as written only “in the blog.” Furthermore, often information on the Web, although being viewed now, was first published much earlier. When quoting someone’s knowledge about a person, a family, or an event, it should be understood when this knowledge was first published (might be a long time ago) and when it was collected (might be even earlier than its first appearance).

Do not violate copyrights; use proper citations. Just like any printed materials, digital and online materials are often sub-

ject to copyrights. It is the responsibility of website owners to mention the copyrights relevant to their content, but it is the responsibility of the users to check these terms. To clarify, you might not be allowed to use things like maps which you add to your summary report or photos from online collections that you use in your presentations for commercial purposes. With that said, it is clear that online sources, just like any other source, are not to be misquoted. Moreover, just like any other source, they should be explicitly and properly cited, adding the full hyperlink and the date viewed (as many sites frequently change).

4. Summary and Implications

While conducting research, professional genealogists might find themselves confronting ethical dilemmas. As was suggested in this article, bringing the Internet into that picture—a necessary step these days—brings new dilemmas. The scalability of the Internet, its availability anywhere and anytime, and the fact that it brings new technologies may promote genealogy research in unimaginable ways; however, these very characteristics often raise pretty high ethical obstacles.

It is therefore suggested that a special section dedicated to online ethics be added to the existing codes of ethics for professional genealogists. This section should give answers, or at least rules of thumb, to questions like “Which law governs the virtual world?” or “Under what conditions it is possible to upload/download data to the Web?” or “Who is responsible for all the masses of information available online?” These questions, and many more, were not present before the Internet era. Now, these questions are not being asked loud enough.

It is suggested that it is the responsibility of our community to determine the new set of ethical guidelines. Of course, it is not an easy task, but it is necessary if we want to keep our profession relevant in the ever-evolving world in which we live.

Endnotes

- 1 Jones, Thomas W. “Good People Doing Wrong.” *APG Quarterly* XXIII, no. 3 (2008): 119-124.
- 2 Notice that the World Wide Web (aka the Web) and the Internet are not one and the same. However, as “the Internet” is the most common term in practice to refer to the Web, it will be used in this article interchangeably with “the Web.”
- 3 Internet Architecture Board (1989). Ethics and the Internet (RFC 1087).
- 4 Although officially released in 1990, it is usually agreed that the turning point for the Web began in 1993, with the introduction of the first Web browsers.
- 5 Miniwatts Marketing Group, “Internet Usage Statistics,” Internet World Stats, 2010, <www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>, accessed on 28 October 2010.

- 6 Eastman, D., "How Popular is Genealogy?" *Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter*, 2009, <<http://blog.eogn.com>>, accessed July 2010.
- 7 Hershkovitz, A. "Using Facebook as a genealogy tool," *Avotaynu*, 22(1) (2010): 27-31
- 8 Veale, K. (2004). "Genealogical education: Finding Internet-based educational content for hobbyist genealogists," In J. Weiss, J. Nolan, J. Hunsinger, and P. Trifonas, *The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments, Volume I* (pp. 939-959), Springer: Dordrecht, The Netherlands.
- 9 Veale, K. "Discussing our family trees: A longitudinal analysis of online, community-based communication in genealogical newsgroups." *Interface*. 2004, <<http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2004/04/veale.php>>, accessed August 2010.
- 10 Jones, Thomas W. "Good People Doing Wrong." *APG Quarterly* XXIII, no. 3 (2008): 119-124.
- 11 In a message posted on October 15, 1983, to the Usenet newsgroup *net.general*, Jerry Schwartz wrote, "I am currently revising the netiquette document, and hope to extend the section on 'questions not to ask,' perhaps even putting it in a separate document."
- 12 Internet Engineering Task Force, the organization that develops and promotes Internet standards, held its first meeting in January 1986.
- 13 RFC stands for "Request for Comments." The document is available at <<http://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1855>>, accessed August 2010.
- 14 Available on the company's international websites. Here is a link to the USA version, <www.microsoft.com/hk/athome/security/online/netiquette.msp>, accessed August 2010.
- 15 "JewishGen FactSheet – Just the Facets..." <www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen/FactSheet.htm>, accessed August 2010.
- 16 "JewishGen FactSheet – Just the Facets..." <www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen/FactSheet.htm>, accessed August 2010.
- 17 "Disclaimer, Site Use, and Privacy Policy," JewishGen, 2010, <www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen/disclaimer.html>, accessed August 2010.
- 18 "Terms and Conditions - Revision as of July 6, 2009," Ancestry.com, 2009, <www.ancestry.com/legal/terms.aspx>, accessed August 2010.
- 19 Jones, Thomas W. "Good People Doing Wrong." *APG Quarterly* XXIII, no. 3 (2008): 119-124.
- 20 Formerly deli.cio.us.
- 21 "Statistics," Facebook, 2010, <www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>, accessed April 20, 2010.
- 22 Alexa Internet, Inc. "Top Sites," Alexa, <www.alexa.com/topsites>, accessed 20 April 2010.
- 23 Dougherty, Heather, "Facebook Reaches Top Ranking in US," Experian, 2010, <http://weblogs.hitwise.com/heather-dougherty/2010/03/facebook_reaches_top_ranking_i.html>, accessed 20 April 2010.
- 24 Considering about 1.8 billion Internet users, as reported by "Internet Usage Statistics," Internet World Stats, 2010, <www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>, accessed 22 April 2010.
- 25 Considering a world population of 6,816,028,270, as projected by "World POPClock Projection," U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, <www.census.gov/ipc/www/popclockworld.html>, accessed 20 April 2010.
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- 29 The option of being *anonymous* is, of course, another important building block of Internet-based communication; however, we feel that the regular old-fashioned proper disclosure of any professional makes the discussion of this issue redundant.
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