

Blending Family History & Technology with the Art of Storytelling

ROOTSTECH 2019
SESSION RT3807

PANELISTS:

Valerie Elkins

ValerieElkins.com

FamilyCherished.com

FamilyCherished@gmail.com

Laura Hedgecock

LauraHedgecock.com

TreasureChestofMemories.com

laura@laurahedgecock.com

Sharleen Reyes

sharleenjreyes@gmail.com

Panelists Valerie Elkins, Laura Hedgecock, and Sharleen Reyes discuss fun and practical ways to incorporate storytelling into your family history pursuits. Participants will learn creative methods of blending genealogical research, family photographs, and technology with the art of storytelling.

This discussion will include the following topics and more:

1 | Why Storytelling Matters to Your Family's History

- CONNECTION - Family history is all about connecting. Stories help us connect—with the past and our families.
- ENGAGEMENT - Storytelling can make facts more engaging; they can transport us to different times and places.
- NEUROSCIENCE - Our brains are wired to process stories. We remember facts better when they're presented in story form. Once we're interested in a story, we're open to more facts and details.

2 | How to Find Your Best Family Stories

- Involve family members in the compilation of family stories.
- Seek out the perfect moments vs the perfect photos.
- Make the beginning compelling – capture interest right away.
- Create a storyboard to help organize the story elements.
- Watch professional storytellers – study their techniques, learn their skills.
- Look for the stories hidden in documents and lurking on your family tree.
- Narrate the story with your voice or person's the story is about.
- Use music to tell the story – song lyrics can help tell the story.

“Great stories happen to those who can tell them.” - IRA GLAS

3 | Listening Skills that Enhance Family Storytelling and Story Preservation

- Actively listen instead of thinking what you want to say.
- Use only a flexible framework to conduct interviews. Stay in the moment.
- Use technology (or a partner in crime) to take notes, so you can make the eye-contact and “lean in” as Brandon Stanton says.
- Remain open to other sides of a story or different versions of the details. Memory is quirky and emotional. Note the different perspectives of the story.

4 | How to Share Your Family Stories

- Integrate family storytelling into your family’s routine and at dinner time, especially big family meals.
- Share digital media with older family members and start conversations that lead to more stories.
- Share hard copies of documents you find in your research with family members to draw them into their ancestors’ stories, as well as to spark memory.
- Develop healthy habits for technology. Use it to enhance connections. Skype with faraway relatives or use social media to keep in touch.
- Be aware of your privacy options in digital and social media tools.

5 | How to Connect Family Stories with Photographs

- Display photographs as “art” throughout your home. Don’t be afraid to hang history on the wall and to rotate photos. Grandma riding a camel, for instance, tells a lot about her sense of adventure.
- Commemorate stories with photo gifts from vendors such as MyCanvas and Shutterfly.
- Digitize old slides, photos, VHS, and film that are languishing in the closet.
- Google is your friend, especially when it comes to providing socio-historical context for old photos.

“There’s always room for a story that can transport people to another place.” - J.K. ROWLING

<p>Valerie Elkins Professional genealogist, presenter, writer</p>	<p>Valerie's Tips: Try different story types. Know your audience Determine what you want to say. Invest in a good microphone – makes all the difference. Leave story seeds, opportunities to share stories. Find the story - look at things from different perspectives.</p> <p>Valerie's Tools: PicMonkey.com for photo editing, Canva.com for design, I also use Google Photos and JoyFlips for photos.</p>
--	---

<p>Laura Hedgecock Author, speaker, blogger</p>	<p>Laura's Tips: Rotate the photographic duties, so you don't end up with no photos of the photographer. Young folks with long arms are great with posing fun selfies. Moments can be as important as momentous events. Don't wait to write down stories.</p> <p>Laura's Tools: Adobe Photoshop Elements for editing, Scrivener for writing, Canva.com for design ideas.</p>
--	--

<p>Sharleen Reyes Marketing leader with 20 years in family memories industry</p>	<p>Sharleen's Tips: Perfect moments can often be found in imperfect photos, because they show off personalities and create conversations more naturally. Also, don't wait to digitize your videos and photos.</p> <p>Sharleen's Tools: Photoshop for editing. Canva.com for adding text and embellishments. Google Photos for organizing. Instagram for sharing.</p>
---	--

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

- MAYA ANGELOU

STORYTELLING TOOLS & RESOURCES

Photo

- Canva.com – Create great graphics from templates
- Picmonkey.com – Improve and edit photos the easy way
- Google Photos - Auto-tagging and organizing people and places
- Adobe PhotoShop Elements for photo editing. It allows you to do a lot of what the full version will do for less than \$100. Particularly good in cleaning up old photos or sub-optimal photography.

Audio & Video

- iMovie – Create your own movies. Movie trailer templates are short, fun and can create interest in the rest of a story
- Audacity – Free multi-task editor and recorder for narrations
- QromaTag app – Uses voice to embed tags, geotags, and captions to your photos' metadata.
- YesVideo – Service for digitizing videotapes and film reels. Available at Costco & Sam's Club photo counters.

Storage & Sharing

- FamilySearch's Memories app – Saves story right to the person on your tree
- JoyFlips app – Free app and website to store pictures and stories
- Instagram – Use a family #hashtag and create images that spur interest in the rest of the story
- Create a family history blog! Can keep it private for just family members
- Facebook groups – Create a private family group to share stories, files, images
- Scrivener for writing – Puts all your research, outlining in one place.

Art & Gifts

- Photo gifts from vendors like Shutterfly, Mixbook, MyCanvas are easy to compile and make great memory gifts. They're also a way to keep family stories visible in the living room.
- Etsy stores and Bayphoto.com can turn your photos into wearable art, jewelry, brag books, Christmas ornaments, and brag books.

Other Resources and Recommended Reading

- FamilyCherished.com
- TreasureChestofMemories.com
- *Memories of Me: A Complete Guide to Telling and Sharing the Stories of Your Life* (Cedar Fort, 2014) <http://www.amazon.com/dp/1462114539>
- Katherine Willson, "Genealogy on Facebook," (pdf), <https://socialmediagenealogy.com/genealogy-on-facebook-list/>.

"The best way to bring people in and have them empathize with others is through storytelling." - LEE UNKRICH