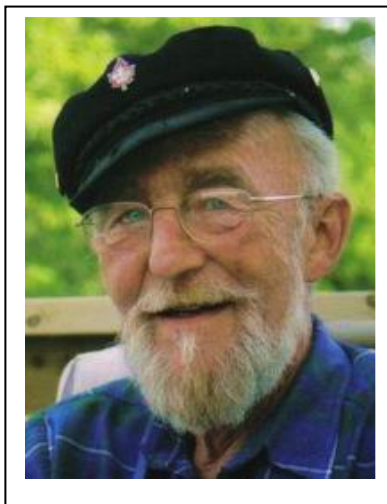


The Family Historian

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Column #65

Resource Centre Etiquette



I recently did a survey of resource centre managers, librarians, and archivists to identify the kinds of researcher behavior that annoyed them and conversely the kinds that pleased them. I would like to thank sincerely all those who responded to the survey.

What I have tried to do here is to pool their responses into a set of recommendations that will help to keep the welcome mat out for us at the various repositories.

Come Prepared: Equip yourself with pencils (pens are not allowed in an archival setting), paper, and change for copiers, printers, parking fees, research fees and/or a donation to the repository.

Know What You Are Looking For: Be very clear about the object of your visit and bring along supporting documentation so that you can give the staff the parameters of your search and what you have already tried. Be as familiar as possible with the resources of that repository so that you are sure you are in the right place. Check out their web site

(www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/directory.html), speak to other researchers, or make a preliminary phone call to the repository to find out what you need to know.

Respect Staffing Constraints: Almost all repositories are chronically understaffed and that means that staff (including volunteer) time has to be managed very efficiently. It is a good idea to identify yourself to the duty staff and tell them exactly why you are there. They may know of someone else who is working on the same subject. But remember that their time is a valuable resource so try to use it efficiently.

Respect Other Researchers: Keep conversation low and to the point. If you bring your children with you, it is your responsibility to ensure that they do not disturb other researchers. If there is a heavy demand on readers, try to use your time on them as efficiently as possible.

Conform to the Centre's Practices: Check for signs or lists of procedures. If they want you to return books, documents, films to a specific location rather than putting them back on the shelf, that is because researchers have often erred in replacing them and they were difficult to find. Even if you are careful, the directive refers to you too.

Respect the Resources: Handling these irreplaceable resources is a privilege that we treasure yet there are still people who will tear out pages, remove documents, or otherwise damage the collection. If you observe such behavior, report it to the resource centre staff.

In Leaving: When you are done and have cleaned up your material, and returned resources to the designated areas, don't forget to thank the staff who made your experience possible. If something good came from it, share it with them briefly, it will help to make their day.

The National Genealogical Society, which has been in operation since 1903, has published a set of "Guidelines for Using Records Repositories and Libraries" as part of their Genealogical Standards series.

It is amazing to see how closely they match the findings of our survey. You can check them out at:

www.ngsgenealogy.org/comstandrecords.htm. The Peerage

While surfing the internet recently, I stumbled on an interesting site. It is a genealogical survey of the Peerage of Britain as well as the royal families of Europe. If you have a titled ancestor, you might want to look him or her up here.

The site is the work of Darryl Lundy of Wellington, New Zealand, and contains about 153,000 people. He recognizes it as a work in progress and is looking for input to both expand it and to correct any errors that may have crept in.

Historical information on the Peerage is notoriously unreliable even in such publications as *Burke's Peerage* and *Debrett's* because so much of it is based on family folklore rather than documented sources. Nonetheless it does provide some data that can be then researched further and verified.

This can be a fun site to visit and is easy to search. Look for it at:

www.thepeerage.com/surname_index.htm.