Using Family Tree Maker (FTM) to Publish Your Family History
by Mike Karsen

Why Not To Publish/To Publish

Genealogists usually spend many years collecting information about their families. Although they understand the importance of sharing it with their families, they often fail to publish their findings for many reasons:

1. I need to learn how the computer program works.

2. I need to get all of the data into my computer.

3. Once I know X, then I can publish.

4. I'm waiting for Aunt Em to send me the information she promised.

5. I need to have all the data.

6. Some of the data I have I'm not really sure about.

The truth is that genealogical research is NEVER done. We can always learn more and, in fact, by publishing your family history you can stimulate your family to provide you other facts about the family. By "publishing" I mean

1. compiling what you know NOW and displaying it in some organized fashion and
2. making multiple copies and
3. distributing them to family members.

Publishing can be very simple and knowing that is the key to getting started. Sharing your work with your family can give them the same feeling of connecting with their ancestors that you as the genealogist have. Some individuals collect information their whole life and never share their work. Remember "Publish Before You Perish!"

Family Tree Maker (FTM) Capabilities

The genealogy computer program Family Tree Maker (FTM) provides many capabilities to aid the user. The **Publishing Center/Books** capability allows you to generate different genealogy documents and then compile them into a book. The important principle to remember is that you can start very simply using only a few elements and then later add more items.

A Simple Book

Once you have entered your family data into the FTM program you are ready to start compiling your family book. Click on the **Publishing Center** or **Books** icon on your toolbar. You will find a menu on the left of your screen of **Available items**. You can select items from the list to add more data to your book. Your pointer should be on the individual you want as the focus of your item before you enter the **Books** section. To start your book you select the item you want to add and click on the add button in the center of your screen. Once you have added items to your book you need to use the **contents** and **format** from the toolbar to customize these items. The following items can be used to make a simple book:

1. **Descendant Tree:** Good to provide for the highest level description of your family. Try to keep it simple so that it all fits onto one page.

2. **Outline Descendant Tree:** Best way to document your entire family by starting with your common ancestor. The indentation levels can be adjusted to get most of the individual's information on a single line. I usually include birth date/place, marriage date/place, death date/place, and occupation.

3. **Family Group Sheet(s):** Simple way to detail the key families you are highlighting in your book. If at all possible include pictures of each individual through entering them into their scrapbook.

4. **Text Item:** A simple way to start making yourself a Family Historian rather than just a genealogist. Here you can enter text information using FTM's word processor-like capability. Pictures can also be easily inserted from your scrapbook. Start your first book with a simple summary of where the family first lived or the origins of the family name.

5. **Table of Contents:** This capability takes the item titles from the right section of your book screen and builds a Table of Contents. If you do not like the title that FTM has assigned you can use the Properties button to customize it.

Once you have built all of your individual items, you can use the **Move up** or **Move down** buttons in the center of the screen to rearrange the order of your items.

Additional Items

As you begin to think of making a more advanced book, you must consider putting pictures into your book. One of my favorite quotes is "Only a genealogist could read a family history with no pictures." If your family loves reading the telephone book, however then I could be wrong! Include pictures of people, places, and things to create a book that allows people to visualize your ancestors and what their lives were like.

The additional available items that can add more depth to your book are the following:

6. **Text Item**: With the aid of pictures use this item to create biographies of individuals, stories about the "old country" or "life in the south". You can also use the text item to include family documents such as birth, marriage, death records or even passenger arrival manifests.

7. **Timeline:** Use the timeline to show the years your ancestors lived--generation by generation. This is best to use where you can go back at least four to five generations. Try to limit to one page.

8. **Information Sources (Genealogy report):** The genealogy report creates a text version of the information you have entered into your file, including sources of the information. By including the source of each piece of information you add to your database, you can document these sources here to add another level of professionalism to your book. Be sure to use the contents to adjust the number of generations to include here to avoid this item becoming too large.

9. **Index:** Once your book is complete, you can index all of the individuals in the book by adding this item. You can fine tune the index to the format you prefer using the content and format selections from your toolbar. FTM does not index

the people mentioned in your text items, but that is only a minor shortcoming.

10. **Place Holder:** If you have some pages that you would like to include which come from another source, insert a place holder where you would like to insert the page or pages. FTM will skip those pages. Simply number the pages you are inserting yourself, and then manually insert them into your final book before you have it reproduced.

The **header/footer** book options can be used to put your book title and edition number/date on every page of your book. It also allows you various ways to number your book. I always put edition numbers on my book acknowledging that a family history is never complete and that future editions will follow.

Final Thoughts

I have published four family histories using FTM and have three more in various stages of completion. FTM allows you to write your book as you are still completing your research, and thus you can give some of your relatives a preview of what's coming. It is important for you to set a limited goal on what you will include in your first book. Set a time goal and then make it a reality. If there is a family event coming up, that might be a good target date. As you see your book come together, the fruits of your labor will prove to you that it was all worth it.

Create Your Family History Book with Family Tree Maker by Marthe Arends, published in 2000, is an excellent guide to aiding you in this endeavor.

DO IT NOW!

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