

Accessing family history - future trends

There have been amazing technological changes in how genealogists and family historians go about the business of researching their families over the last decade or two. More and more we are seeing online resources being made available either free or on a pay-to-view basis. Social networking on sites such as Facebook is huge and even Twitter has a dedicated family history and genealogy following. Similarly there has been a proliferation of personal websites and blogs with more and more people publishing online. Researchers often now go to these varied sites for up-to-date information rather than their local library. While there is still a demand for print and CD ROM genealogical and local history publications, more and more researchers are happy to download an e-copy or read newsletters and PDFs online.

What does that mean for publishers in this field? Sometimes they are providing three versions of a publication – paper, CD, and e-copy because there is demand for all three formats and will be for some time to come. Further, many genealogists are also now choosing to self-publish on their websites and through blogs rather than use a traditional publisher.

What does it mean for libraries? Publishing in three formats makes it difficult for libraries because they usually can't afford to purchase and make available all three types. They may not be able to purchase local and family histories relevant to their areas because they may not be in traditional print or CD formats. How will clients find web-based information? Will they still visit the library?

Unlock the Past (UTP), established in August 2009, is an exciting, collaborative venture between a number of partners and sponsors to promote history and genealogy in Australia and New Zealand. Primary activities will be organising and participating in events such as seminars, road shows, expos,

fairs, and conferences, and publishing new resources for genealogy and family historians in Australia and New Zealand in both print and electronic formats.

The website will host online articles and blogs written by UTP speakers and experts, audio and video podcasts, as well as published information booklets on topics presented by the UTP team. One of UTP's objectives is that its website will be the first place to go for information and advice on history and genealogy in Australia and New Zealand by not only providing information but also by acting as a gateway to other relevant sites.

When organising or participating in an event, UTP will be working closely with local history and genealogy groups, libraries, and other interested parties because, to be successful, community support is needed. We envisage that regional and remote areas in particular will benefit from having access to speakers and events that would not normally be offered outside of a capital city. It is anticipated that sponsorship and in kind support from local groups, libraries, and organisations will allow these events to be offered at a nominal cost to attendees.

More information on Unlock the Past is available on the website and anyone interested in contributing or participating in an event is most welcome to contact us. A calendar of existing events together with a list of experts and speakers is also online.

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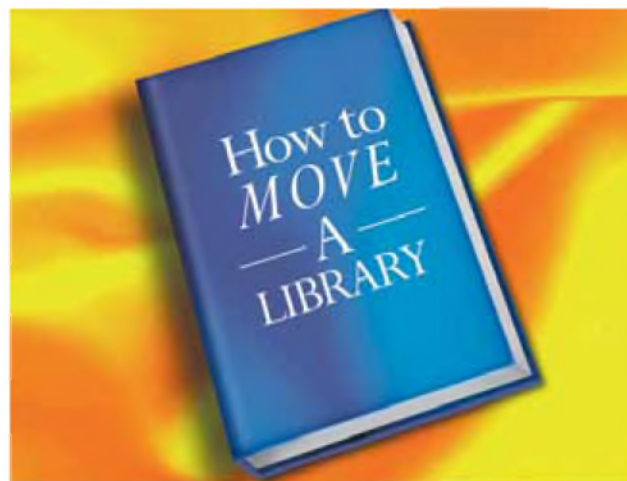
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