Capturing the Present, Engaging the Future
Designing a Social History Network in a Digital Age

A thesis submitted to the School of Visual Communication Design,
College of Communication and Information
of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

by
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May 2012
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Acknowledgments

I want to thank my father, mother, and both sisters in supporting me through this exciting journey. I am so very grateful to have a family who believed in me and in an issue I chose to study that I am so passionate about.

I want to dedicate this research to everyone who gave me a little nudge along the way, letting me know to keep going and to never give up. You know who you are.
Preface

While observing my mother only a year ago as she started her interest of family history research, I was fascinated by visiting the Ohio Genealogical Society located in Bellville, Ohio and seeing all of the old public records stored there. Here, I observed many patrons painstakingly searching through numerous volumes of public records or spending hours on microfiche films looking through old newspapers. I would overhear patrons speaking to librarians or staff members about having a really hard time locating information on so-and-so. Or, regretting talking to so-and-so about someone before they died. Some patrons one could tell were regulars and had the entire place memorized. They would bring in all of their notebooks and documents, sometimes even a lunch. I knew they were going to be there all day.

After a few visits and watching patrons busily digging through the past, it occurred to me that if these people were so concerned about finding this information, are they doing anything now to document themselves and their families? Are generations from now going to be grumbling online or in the book stacks wishing so-and-so would have taken the time to leave something for them to discover?

Immediately, a panic set in as I realized that I haven’t really started documenting myself. Where does one start? What is the best way? Do I have time? It was critical to investigate this more and discover if there was a need for this issue. I began simply by talking to individuals who currently participate in family history research. To my surprise, when asking how they were documenting themselves, individuals shared my panic, claiming that they really didn’t think about it before. They were so stuck in the past, the present and the future has been rolling right on by. Before we know it years, even decades will fly by before we realize and reflect on what we are going to leave behind as our legacy. That is, if you think about it at all.
As a designer, I know I do not have the authority to decide if individuals are or are not documenting themselves today. I however have a passion to discover how and if we are documenting ourselves, and learning if there is a way that I can design something to help facilitate the transition of these messages, be it writings, stories, photographs, etc., to our future families.

This thesis is just a start to many questions that I have, and hope to answer regarding personal narratives and the practice of self documentation.
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Chapter I

Introduction

For thousands of years, stories have been the ultimate source and basic instruction for human emotion and understanding. Stories operate on many levels and communicate on multiple ways that we as humans understand and appreciate. Though we might forget some of the details over time, stories stir emotions within us which contribute greatly to their overall meaning. The whole experience can lead to sudden realizations and serve to change our perceptions forever. In short, stories provide valuable “packages of meaning” that are quickly and often profoundly assimilated into subconscious map of reality, thus forming our individual narrative, our “life story” if you will (Bowkett, 2007 p.62-63).

As we grow older, our love of storytelling never really goes away. We start to wonder who we are and where we came from and how we belong in this world. We find a renewed sense of contentment as we hear our parents and family members recall stories of themselves growing up, or even stories about ourselves. We relive those childhood days of feeling a sense of belonging and start searching for answers to questions we have in our lives.

What makes these family stories great is that they are real. These accounts capture our attention and teaches us lessons in layers, while the most powerful experiences linger in our memories for years. Stories are easy to share, and become reference points for physical, emotional, mental, and sometimes spiritual connections in our lives.

Historians are systematically collecting living people’s testimony and life experiences while attempting to verify and analyze their findings. There are many methods to gathering and collecting memories and stories – the most popular being one-on-one interviews. Not only do historians strive to place these stories in an accurate historical context, they are also concerned with storage of the data for future use by scholars (Moyer, 1999). Historians recognize that preserving unwritten and unrecorded history of everyday memories from ordinary people has great historical importance. The data collected from everyday life and
insights into the mentalities of “ordinary people” is proving very valuable, being that the
information is simply unavailable from more conventional sources (George). Consequently, a
new generation of social historians is emerging as the demand increases for interpreting and
analyzing these enriching interviews.

But is oral history the best way to record memories in this digital age of multimedia?
Oral history is crucial for two very important reasons; its research and informational value.
Historians acknowledge that human memory is not always accurate, but life experiences can
be used to assist in informing historical records and events. Not only does this information
inform researchers about past perspectives on everyday life, it can indicate how memories have
been influenced over time. Through research conducted throughout this thesis process it has
been discovered that not only oral histories are important, but visual histories as well.

People's stories are unique and valuable treasures for families and communities. It is
time to reevaluate how information is passed on between generations moving forward in a
digital age. This thesis research will help aide families in capturing these stories the moment
they happen and will create a resource for social historians, archivists, independent researchers,
educators and future family members, offering more insight into everyday life in the future.

Originally this research trajectory was looking to address the growing need to collect
large amounts of data vital to social history, and was going to focus on the design of a social
history network, merging user participation and artifact submission with public records from
libraries, museums, archives, and historical societies.

As both primary and secondary research evolved it became clear that one method of
memory collecting and social data stood out above all the rest. It was only after discovering the
need for stories of individuals everyday lives that research could be done to build upon how
to translate these stories not only into the hands of future family members, but how to use
them to build a social history network, a library of human experience for future generations.
Narrowing down one form of storytelling and memory sharing proved challenging, but
one method proved through research the most valuable. The use of photography in visual storytelling. As a visual communicator it is very appropriate and rewarding to study this media form in regards to visual storytelling and how it is vital to capturing present stories today to pass on to future generations.

Recording and capturing personal histories is easier and more efficient with today’s digital recording technology. Taking this information, storing and securing it, as well as making it available to the masses for research and education is the number one priority of this initiative. Creating a network where users from all over can contribute and participate is a step in the direction of expanding the amount and the quality of data to create more realistic social histories in the future. Instead of focusing traditionally on well-known historical figures, a more community based outreach model was developed to give common people a voice.

This thesis will break down the methodology that was used to determine the distinct needs of the user group that was being studied and evaluated as well as explain the process through results and recommendations about how the situation can be improved and built upon for the future.
Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

Links to the past

To understand the traditions of searching for these stories and narratives of the lives of ordinary people, it is necessary to understand genealogy and the rise in popularity of family history, as well as the status and history of archives and public records today. “The need for a dedicated, centralized public institution to service the genealogical demand illustrates the growth in this field over the past 30 years, a time when genealogy turned into ‘family history’—a more inclusive term suggesting a sense of identity rather than the more traditional proving of (paternal) bloodline” (De Groot, 2009 p. 73).

The study of genealogy and the researching of family history has been popular in the past decade or two, mostly with the rise of digital technology and the more and more vital and public records being placed online. Families are finding it easier to locate records from the convenience of their home, rather than travel to many locations in search of records. The internet has changed the way we look for information and how we can access it. “Genealogy, family history and local history as amateur leisure illustrate that the pursuit of history has a particular social function and is part of a continuum or non-work related pastimes” (De Groot, 2009 p. 61). Never before has there been more resources for family historians searching for past records than there is today online.

At first, many individuals think that genealogy is a professional study that takes years of training and specialized access to a wide variety of archives and government offices. Today, people from all ages enjoy this rewarding hobby and start looking into their own family history for a variety of reasons. Some enjoy searching because a love of history and want to know more about their ancestors, placing them and their life experiences in a historical context. Others might want to simply know who came before them and get addicted to finding information leading to exciting discoveries. “Key to the phenomenon of local history
is a sense of the importance of personal interest and fulfillment. The action of historical investigation is liberating, rewarding, fosters a sharp definition of selfhood and community” (De Groot, 2009 p. 63-64).

Family history brings ancestors back to life by telling their stories and giving voice to the forgotten.” The historiography of family history such as it is, is invested in the local, the specific, and the material from the beginning. It makes the familiar more luminous or meaningful, as well as enfranchising the participants—both in terms of the actual investigator (who is able to pursue research with little or no training) and in terms of the family member (whose information becomes valued as evidence and source)” (De Groot, 2009 p. 74). “There is certainly a sense of national and individual identity folded into this, of a nationhood built from the histories of past individuals, despite the often transnational results of enquiry” (De Groot, 2009 p. 74).

Traditionally, the only records one is going to find about their ancestors are records such as birth, death, and marriage certificates, census data, ship and passenger records, military records, and other various government documents. If one is lucky, one might discover photographs of one’s relatives and if extremely lucky, writings or audio recordings. The work is not easy and if a record or two is found online, it is best to verify it and validate the findings with original documents. “People today, more than one hundred years later, find their identities recorded and inscribed in bureaucratic files and data banks; their official human identities are found in x-rays, birth certificates, driver’s licenses, and DNA samples” (Tucker, 2006 p. 2). It is important now more than ever that we ourselves are the guides to represent and construct our identity “outside these formalized and authoritative records” (Tucker, 2006 p. 2).

Public records are designed by and were traditionally used by clerks, lawyers, civil engineers, and other various government offices. These forms and records give some facts and figures about relatives and family ancestors, but are not always accurate. From a family
history standpoint, they can be great starting points to learn names and ages, possibly locations of where people lived, but nothing truly satisfying, such as a photograph, a piece of writing, or what the life of that particular individual was like back in the day.

“Most records in American archives were not created with the needs and interests of historians in mind. They are however founded and maintained by historians with research principles” (Wingen, 2008 p. 575). “The historian is the keeper and constructor of the memory of those marginalized by history; the narrative chronicler and reanimator of events such as combat which the reader has no access to; the repository of ‘good sense’ and the giver of pleasure and enjoyment” (De Groot, 2009 p. 43).

Today, archivists have the duty of deciding what records to keep, and what records to dismiss. They have the difficult job of deciding what is worth preserving. “Almost any document could be potentially useful to a social historian, a situation that further complicates archivists’ already difficult decisions about what to keep” (Wingen, 2008 p. 579). Many argue that archives need to re-examine the materials they solicit and acquire. Archivists work with a lot of different audiences that include historians, librarians, genealogists, and the general public that depend on their expertise on what items are worth saving. “One vision of the digital future involves the preservation of everything—the dream of the complete historical record. The current reality, however, is closer to the reverse of that—we are rapidly losing the digital present that is being created because no one has worked out a means of preserving it” (Cohen, 2006 p. 9-10).

The public is very interested in reading about the untold stories of human progress, which can be difficult to find on everyday people. “Diaries, witness accounts, autobiography, and memoir all promise unique and unmediated insight into important lives and events. Even when edited, they are original documents, and therefore bring the reader closer to ‘actual’ historical investigation than most popular history books” (De Groot, 2009 p. 33). “Witness accounts provide a similarly direct-if-edited-interface with history. Such accounts
often focus on the words and experiences of ordinary people. They invoke pity, particularly accounts relating to hardship and horror” (De Groot, 2009 p. 34).

In order for archives to be stable and relevant they need to attract a broad range of users. “A truly representative documentation of America’s heritage is impossible unless all archivists seriously consider the diversity of American society as they appraise its documentary evidence” (Wingen, 2008 p. 581). “History actually dictated the types of records kept, together with the format and content of those records. It also dictated those which were not kept and those which were lost or destroyed. History dictated social stratification, patterns of migration and settlements, even occupations. Hostile Indian wars, land policies, political figures and legislation, persecutions, disease, epidemics, droughts, fires—all of these factors and many more have had a profound effect on genealogy and genealogical records in America” (Greenwood, 2000 p. 11).

**Digital data**

Currently, with the advent of the internet and the acceleration of digital technologies, archivists, historians, and librarians are finding it difficult to keep up with the change in demand. Individuals are seeking and expecting records and accounts to be digitized and readily available online. Archivists are not only trying to maintain and expand upon already existing analog collections, but analyze, interpret, appraise, and sort the digital documents which are created at an alarmingly fast rate. So fast, that archives are just beginning to create systems for determining what is worth saving, and the best ways to save it. “New methods of appraisal for electronic records are being developed, strategies for digital continuity are being implemented, and new presentation systems are being pioneered” (De Groot, 2009 p. 93). Not only are new systems being developed to maintain analog records now turned digital, systems are also needed to address data and information that society has created that was born digital. An issue that is so new and rapidly developing, digital technology having
such a contrast to the slower pace of analog forms. “Archival structures arrange digital information differently from analogue, and the multiple changes in the organizing principles of these institutions and the way that documents are arranged, preserved and accessed will of necessity alter methods of research and scholarship” (De Groot, 2009 p. 93).

“The storage, interface and conservation of electronic information affect historical research, and the issues associated with this are even more complex for ‘born-digital’ information: that which does not materially or physically exist in analogue form” (De Groot, 2009 p. 92). These new systems are severely effecting the ways in which family members are searching for data on ancestors. Through various methods of primary research, the results show that individuals are so caught up in the craze of released digitized analog files and searching backwards into the past, that they haven’t considered documenting the present simultaneously, which will create issues for generations to come. “Born-digital historical documents profoundly affect the way that people use them and the types of knowledge that are accessed and created” (De Groot, 2009 p. 93).

Researchers are also discovering that it is becoming more difficult to conceal identity of qualitative as opposed to quantitative research in the data this is being collected and stored in archives. This can pose problems to family historians searching for family records as historians and archivist work to ensure protection in qualitative data archives (Parry, 2004 p. 147). With the capturing of digital data such as social media and personal information today, archivists will also have to discover methods of ensuring protection for the information that is kept.

The appreciation and value of digital files are on the rise however. “Computer technology enhanced historians’ ability to perform statistical analyses and to use traditional records in creative ways in order to write the history of the forgotten masses” (Wingen, 2008 p. 577). “There is a new and emerging sense of dynamic textuality and technology literacy. Mainstream, older definitions of information fragment, transform and develop into
something new and complex; the implications of born-digital materials for archives and for researchers are profound” (De Groot, 2009 p. 93). “Today’s social scientists are increasingly encouraged to locate, access and analyze data from data archives worldwide, utilizing a range of documentation initiatives software systems and network tools” (Parry, 2004 p. 140).

People today now engage with history primarily online or through interactive means. Historians and archivists are already seeing that the public is hungry for the records that are being digitized and shared with them for their family history needs. How information is being released, presented, engaged with, searched, and protected is crucial for the future of genealogy research.

“Users need not have connections, either conceptual or physical, to the information they download; that information is used, retrieved, and deployed, in newly particular fashion. On this model, ‘history’ or rather the sets of information relating to the past—document, artifact, image, database—become another group of strands in cyberspace, accessible and usable to just about anyone who has access to the internet. This dislocation of authority models or hierarchies of meaning is crucial to the fragmentation of cultures in globalization” (De Groot, 2009 p. 91). “The personalization of history is important, and the sense of ownership associated with genealogical investigation illustrates a key issue, that of self-revelation. Through understanding the action of ancestors the searcher comes to truth and understanding; they own their family history” (De Groot, 2009 p. 76).

**Personal narratives**

So far, the research has went in depth discussing information that can be found or has been saved. It is crucial to understand the issues and information that is not being found and is of the most value to not only archivists, historians, and librarians, but to families as well. This information is the personal narratives of individuals and their everyday lives.

“Personal narrative analyses, in contrast, offer insights from the point of view of
narrators whose stories emerge from their lived experiences over time and in particular social, cultural, and historical settings” (Maynes, 2008 p. 16). Many historians support the notion of studying America from the bottom up. In order to understand social history and create a truly accurate understanding of the individuals who lived it, experience of all social groups needs to be revealed. “Slavery could not be understood by investigating only Abraham Lincoln” (Kyvig, 2010 p. 9). Since the 1960s, scholars have started to adopt their traditional methods and techniques to explore past society by looking into”micro histories” (Kyvig, 2010 p. 9).

Traditionally, theories and research methods organized stories of people into categories such as race, gender, sexual orientation, social class, occupation, citizenship, etc. while their motivations and actions were explained, largely through reference (Maynes, 2008). “Consequently, within such frameworks, human agency is reduced to social position; understandings of the relationship between the individual and the social remain superficial. Social actors are treated as if they had little or no individual history, no feelings or ambivalences, no self-knowledge–in short, no individuality” (Maynes, 2008 p. 16).

Today with the accessibility of the internet and the more and more individuals who are using online tools and methods to share their personal stories and lives, it is becoming increasing apparent that people are becoming more responsible and proactive into the content that is being generated about them. “We are moving away from a world in which some produce and many consume media toward one in which everyone has a more active stake in the culture that is produced” (Jenkins, 2009 p. 12).

A new participatory culture is being developed because of the accessibility of the internet that encourages individuals to share their lives with family and friends like never before. “A participatory culture is a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby experienced participants pass along knowledge to novices”
It is important to take a look at how historians and archivists are going to catalog and preserve the stories and data individuals create in the future. In the past, authenticity of a record was and still is very important in considering a records legitimacy. “The best and most useful records are the nearest in time and place to an event” (Kyvig, 2010 p. 54). An account by an eyewitness written the day of an event is ordinarily to be preferred to a recollection years later by someone who received it secondhand. Can the same be true for the social media that is being generated today? Will historians treat the immediacy of Facebook posts and tweets from Twitter after a natural disaster in the same light as journals written by Civil War soldiers recounting events at the conclusion of a horrific battle? “An individual only directly ‘experiences’ the events of his or her own lifetime, and most common conventions of life storytelling privilege this temporality” (Maynes, 2008, p. 43).

There is no question that personal narratives are extremely valuable in understanding the events of human lives and how generations of people conquered and survived various challenges in every day life. The question today is how has society shifted in experiencing, sharing, and saving these stories so that they can be reflected on and used as guidance for new challenges in the future. In the past these personal testimonies “offer[ed] insights into human agency as seen from the inside out; as such they bridge[d] the analytic gap between outside positionalities and interior worlds, between the social and the individual” (Maynes, 2008 p. 16). Theses narratives allow[ed] scrutiny of key subjective dimensions of motivation—emotions, desires, accumulated wisdom, acquired associations and meanings, clouded judgements, and psychic make-up—all of which are the product of a lifetime of experiences" (Maynes, 2008 p. 16).

“The evidence presented in personal narratives is unabashedly subjective, and its narrative logic presents a story of an individual subject developing and changing through time” (Maynes, 2008 p. 16). It is important that when individuals are discovering past
personal narratives to also keep an open mind and take a look at what was happening in the world at that time. Personal narratives should not be the only source evaluated to understand a particular issue or event, but can be used to fill in the gaps and provide a more well rounded story in a historical context. “Lives are lived at the intersection of individual and social dynamics; life stories are correspondingly structured by multiple narrative logics and temporal frames–individual and collective” (Maynes, 2008 p. 43). “At the same time, personal narratives are contextualized by, reflect on, and explore the individual’s place in collective events and historical time. They evoke many additional narratives with their own distinct temporalities beyond individual life” (Maynes, 2008 p. 43).

There are many methods used to capture personal narratives, the most popular being oral histories. Through the course of this thesis many forms were studied and evaluated, but one form of storytelling and memory making proved more valuable than the rest. The next section goes into a brief history of the photo album and its importance to family history and how this practice has evolved in a digital age.

19th century memory making

With the invention of photography in 1837, individuals became immediately obsessed and curious with the new technology. By 1850, photo albums started to emerge commercially for consumers to protect and preserve their photographic keepsakes. “Photograph albums developed much later than photography itself because early photographs, like paintings, were treated as unique items, not as images to be reproduced and shared” (Tucker, 2006 p. 207). Photography albums were not only a luxury for the rich, but a necessity for the people.

Family members realized that it was important to have their portraits taken and to share copies of their pictures with family and friends. “If memory failed to reproduce the dead or distant, photographs succeeded beyond expectations in bringing them back to life
or hearth” (Tucker, 2006 p. 255-256). With having multiple photos available, members of the family could start their own albums and build onto them when they started their new families. “This symbol of family could be carried across the country (or ocean), paradoxically allowing families to divide, migrate and settle elsewhere while at the same time bringing them closer together. The family photograph album became more than a passing fad: it became an object and a set of practices that practically defined the family as such” (Tucker, 2006 p. 255). Young people collected photos for courtship and match-making. Photo albums provided a means to integrate circles of friends and relatives into a single volume. “A photograph album gives tangible form to an intangible network of affection” (Tucker, 2006 p. 210).

The family photo album was an important centerpiece in the home and in the family life. “Rapidly joining the family Bible on the parlor table as a proof of middle-class gentility, the photograph album quickly established its own conventions, its own rules for maintenance and domestic display, and practices that continue to shape collections of family pictures today” (Tucker, 2006 p. 12).

Photo albums were so important that a Dr. A.H. Platt between 1864-1865 created a genealogical photo album that included information cards to fill out regarding family members and room for up to 11 children to be documented. Dr. Platt urged people to annotate albums to preserve history and to create memorial books to serve as monuments to the past and a legacy for the future. “Platt sensed a deficiency throughout the families of the country, one in which heritages and histories stood to perish entirely; with this book he intended to provide a useful system for the families who were desirous of records of their past” (Tucker, 2006 p. 258).

“There seemed to be a strong sense, even this early in the game, that personal memories would from this point on be constructed through photographs and, furthermore, that individual histories would intersect more with national ones, which were also beginning
to take shape in photographs. The form of this genealogical album marks a new kind of record keeping and a new kind of knowledge, one in which images and text justify each other and one that would influence the shape of family histories in years to come” (Tucker, 2006 p. 262).

**Memory making and self documentation today**

Photography and the ability of how individuals take photos has come a long way since the 19th century. Today, some believe that technology has decreased the value of a single moment in life. One blogger writes, “I miss the days where a picture was actually worth a thousand words instead of a thousand photos meaning not too much” (Lam, 2009). Individuals use to be choosy when shooting photos. Today the moment can be captured in a rapid fire approach, the story being told in sequential snapshots, which is not the same as a story within a single snapshot. “The excess dilutes the original emotion behind the specific moment” (Lam, 2009). “With the advent of digital photography and the ability to capture a moment (or every moment) with our various electronics, we've somehow lost the ceremony that once existed in taking a picture” (Lam, 2009).

Today, it is not hard to see that people are still very interested in capturing life moments and sharing with friends and family. The motivation and behavior is still there, but the technology has changed. The various social media tools and resources today have it made it very easy to facilitate these desires, but perhaps being so easy and convenient has also cheapened the experience. An argument can be made that Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr, and other social media sites and tools are the 21st century scrapbooking and photo albums of our everyday lives. The big question is how are future relatives going to find out about these sites and will they still be around. If they do find them, what are we leaving for them to find?

“As was true for the late nineteenth century, the other heyday of scrapbook and album
makers, this is a time of changing technology, with nostalgia and retrospection popular, memoirs a favorite literary form, and a world that seems awash with paper. When one can easily download illustrations and digitize or even improve the quality of older photographs, the appeal of making one’s own book is strong” (Tucker, 2006 p. 21).

Qualities and dangers of digital history

Today, the world wide web offers searchers a vast amount of information in which they can comb through with such specificity. “…[A]t some point, we may be able to dynamically map (temporally and geographically) historical events drawn from tens of thousands of historical sources” (Cohen, 2006, p. 7) because of the richness and vastness of the data individuals are putting online.

Currently, data storage is dropping in price rapidly. Computer scientist, Michael Lesk feels that in the future “there will be enough disk space and tape storage in the world to store everything people write, say, perform, or photograph” (Cohen, 2006 p. 3-4). If this is true, why delete anything from current historical record if it cost so less to save it? “How might our history writing be different if all historical evidence were available? (Cohen, 2006 p. 3-4).

The accessibility of the internet provides an environment for individuals to consume and produce content unlike any other time in history. Online archives open locked doors for people who rarely had access before. Historical documents can now be viewed 24 hours a day. (Cohen, 2006). The internet also provides a rich platform for text, images, sounds, and moving pictures which transforms the way in which people consume history and all of its diverse content.

There are also downsides to this medium. [M]anipulating historical data with electronic tools, as a way of finding things that were not previously evident (Cohen, 2006 p. 6-7) are just some of the dangers in working with digital history. The web also encourages interactivity which can both have pros and cons when looking at the legitimacy of historical
data. Because user content is being developed and moved to the web, the information is entering a less controlled environment than perhaps a scholarly journal, museum, or a classroom. The ease of moving through narratives or data undirected and in multiple ways can be frightening for historians and archivists who want to share content to the public online. Both forgery and movement of forgery to the web are very easy in digital networked world (Cohen, 2006 p. 8). This on the flip side can be worrying for historians and archivists trying to protect and consume the data that is being generated by the public to preserve.

**The digital present**

The views of society are ever-changing and are heavily influenced by the technological advancements of the time. For generations born during this digital era, the views and behaviors on personal documentation and generating content are very different than their ancestors from generations past. Piotr Czerski, a Polish political writer wrote in a literary manifesto that “[p]articipating in cultural life is not something out of the ordinary to us: global culture is the fundamental building blocks of our identity, more important for defining ourselves than traditions, historical narratives, social status, ancestry, or even language that we use” (Madrigal, 2012).

“The most important weapon for building the digital future we want is to take an active hand in creating digital history in the present” (Cohen, 2006 p. 13). “[R]esearchers in psychology, anthropology, and sociology have long endeavored to understand the relationship between the tools humans invent and the social, representational and relational systems that emerge and co-institute historical development” (Lewis, 2010 p. 352). Now more than ever with the advent of the internet and digital technology, individuals are using tools such as social media to share information and ideas. More than ever people are putting everything online, particularly photos and videos that display everyday life of everyday people. “We are creating public archives of the events of our lives like never before” (Niedzviecki, 2009 p. 9-10).
“Technology writer Clive Thompson talks about the way in which all the bits and pieces of information one can glean from following various blog posts, tweets, and status updates can come together ‘like thousands of dots making a pointillist painting’” (Niedzviecki, 2009 p. 29). He writes, “Each little update—each individual bit of social information—is significant on its own, even supremely mundane. But taken together, overtime, the little snippets coalesce into a surprisingly sophisticated portrait of your friends’ and family members’ lives” (Niedzviecki, 2009 p. 29). “In terms of new forms of media, the interactive world wide web is widely recognized as the greatest learning tool in human history, with impact broader than the printing press in knowledge dissemination and more rapid in its diffusions” (Lewis, 2010 p. 354).

So what does this mean for family history practices in the future? Instead of discovering albums, scrapbooks, diaries or journals in analog form, future family members will have to sift through pages and pages of digital data to paint a portrait of who someone was. “The ability to accurately publish or record our conversations to pass on to future generations is a relatively new concept. For thousands of years, stories containing myths, legends, laws, and mores of a group or society has been passed down through oral reiteration, or storytelling” (Safko, 2010 p. 471).

A new form of digital storytelling will be the future of how society will pass on our knowledge. “…[T]he media that flows over digital social networks offers individuals and communities opportunities to communicate with broad global reach as well as with personal intimacy” (Lewis, 2010 p. 352). Now more than ever it is important that we harness the digital technologies at our disposal to create our stories and design systems to not only protect these accounts, but also make them useful to generations in the future.

The power of social media

The youth today are craving a form of identity. Instead of having social media and ads
telling them who they are, this research is attempting to establish who they are from where they came from by tapping into the motivations of social media and harnessing its power of community, repurposing it for use in documenting the family. “Cycles of reflection and production are rapid and intertwined, as youth engage in a form of identity management work through collecting feedback on their selves and their communities” (Lewis, 2010 p. 355). Future generations could greatly benefit from these cycles of reflection brought on by the power of social media and techniques of contemporary self documentation.

“People become accustomed to seeing but glimpses of one another’s social worlds, with only fleeting connections between symbolic representations of these worlds in photos, video or composite media, and little possibility for the melding of meanings and the co-creation of worlds” (Lewis, 2010 p. 356). This “collective monologue” is a direct result of “participation [that is] linearly routinized in a timescale of immediacy” (Lewis, 2010 p. 357).

Social networking is as old as the existence of human kind. “Humans have an instinctual need to be with, communicate, share thoughts, ideas, feelings, about daily lives” (Safko, 2010, p. 10). Only the tools we use in which we communicate have changed over time. There are many tools that individuals use to connect, share, educate, interact, and build trust with others. Blogging online has become one of the universal modes of social acceptance and an incredible tool used for personal narrative and documentation. “Ordinary people want to put their lives into the (mass) mediated environment. And other ‘ordinary’ people want to read about those lives” (Niedzviecki, 2009, p. 7). “For the first time in human history, we have an easy and free means to collect and save our thoughts and ideas, and for the first time ever, we can distribute those ideas to the globals tribe instantly, also for free” (Safko, 2010 p. 471). “Social psychology dictates that people are social beings who are gratified by the fact that they receive direct responses to their input. Blogs are a good example of this kind of immediate acknowledgment, whereby readers can instantly comment on and participate in live content” (Safko, 2010 p. 26).
Sharing of photos, video, and audio no doubt are popular forms of communicating and storytelling. Sharing photos are a way of capturing moments in time, which captures the emotions that we share with others (Safko, 2010 p. 10). Photos provide a rush of emotions and memories and become small easy to share moments with individuals. Video is the preferred choice of medium for relaying information overall since it is the next best thing to being in the same room with someone (Safko, 2010). “Human psychology is such that the more robust or stimulating the experience, the more engaging it is, and the better we comprehend and retain that experience. An engaging video also endures that your viewer will watch it to its conclusion” (Safko, 2010 p. 225). Audio recordings have their benefits too, being that the medium is easier to digest than text and evokes mental images that video does not allow (Safko, 2010 p. 11).

“The fragmented forms of micro-communication serve a sampling function of the social ecosystem—allowing people to collect lots of small bits of information about people or communities to give them insights into patterns and truths that inform future choices and interactions” (Lewis, 2010 p. 355). A trusted network is needed to help preserve the stories of everyday individuals to build a library of human experience. “People usually become motivated to contribute valuable information to the group with the expectation that one will received useful help or info and recognition in return” (Safko, 2010 p. 26) “Some individuals may also freely contribute valuable information because they get a sense of contribution and a feeling of having some influence over their environment” (Safko, 2010 p. 26) “It’s all about saving and distributing content, some valuable, some conversational, but all a necessity of human nature” (Safko, 2010 p. 471).

**Conclusion**

In order for future families to find out about how individuals lived today, it is vital
that people leave something for them to find now. Archivists and historians can only do so much to gather and collect information. Bureaucratic records are only going to give limited clues. The rich history—the stories and photographs are up to us to document and store.

In order to achieve this, a change in perspective from living and thinking in the now, to planning for the future must be considered. The power of social media is a start to consider documenting our daily lives. Perhaps changing the perspective from a leisure activity to more of a historical and archival duty to our future relatives is one way to address this issue.

With the fast paced environment of today, families are finding it hard to find time to write or reflect about their daily experiences. Time passes, and years go by without any traces—except for maybe a few pictures. The worst is when a loved one passes and the regret a family feels for not spending more time with them, or not having any of their memories preserved.

Social media can aide in the act of self documentation and personal narrative, being that the future is moving this route in a digital age. Participation in social media could be a way for someone whereas writing in a journal could be a way for someone else. There is no argument that there is a need for saving this information, particularly stories and memories. This thesis mission is to create a system to facilitate it, aiding families in a network that makes capturing these memories easy, manageable, and above all else enjoyable.

The second half of this thesis takes a look at the things archivists and historians are trying to hang onto as well as the types of things family historians are wishing they were finding. A deeper analysis through a triangulation of research methods reveals the most valuable medium that has stood the test of time.
Chapter III

Research Methodology

Overview

After a semester of light secondary research and searching for a topic, a proposal was submitted to the Kent State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). After the proposal was approved by the IRB, the thesis was awarded clearance by the University to start research. Primary research commenced while continuation of secondary research in the form of a literature review occurred simultaneously.

Primary research in the form of a survey, as well as observations and interviews were conducted throughout the thesis process. Once a clear trajectory was established as a result from a triangulation of primary and secondary research methods, a prototype idea was started.

In the original production schedule, plans for a prototype were in place as well as time for user testing of the prototype and analysis from the testing results. The true trajectory of the research came at a very late stage of the thesis process, rendering little time for development of a prototype. In order to finish analysis of the first half of this research process in time for oral defense, the development of the prototype was halted and plans for usability testing were dissolved.

Plans to pick up prototype ideas upon completion of oral defense of this thesis are being developed. After further analysis of the first half of design research, it was decided that not enough research was done on certain areas of the literature review, and more time was necessary in order to render the prototype worthy of being developed. Simply, time ran out on the IRB contract for the completion of a thesis prototype.

The following pages are summaries of the methods used to complete this research. The series of appendices go more in depth as to how these methods affected the research and the impact they had in its entirety.
While conducting this thesis study, it was necessary to create a chart to guide the research and map a production schedule. This chart was used as a guide to document various research and design processes, strategies, and tactics, as well as provide a checklist for each stage of the thesis. To see the chart created for this thesis please refer to Appendix A: Research Projection Chart on page 51.

The development of a longitudinal projection model was created from the collaborative work with fellow colleague Jason Goupil, while conducting another research...
investigation. During our joint work, it was necessary to review our research methods from a broad scope overview. Following an extensive literature review, we wished to examine the entire strategy of the study before conducting any primary research. This model developed quickly as there were three questions associated with every method we considered: What is the purpose of this method in regards to subject -or- what information are we hoping to unearth with this method? What are the actions associated with this method? What is the proposed outcome of this method which would lead us to the next stage of the study?

This projection model can be used as a tool to efficiently maneuver through a study, seeing where overlaps exist with participants, the ratio of quantitative and qualitative methods used, to ensure triangulation of the research, permit quick adaptations to strategies if necessary, and demonstrate the study in its entirety with quick precision. Following the creation of the model, Kent State University’s Visual Communication Design graduate program adopted the projection model due to its universal application and relevance with conducting research. Jason and I encourage researchers to appropriate this model in future research investigations.

**Observations**

Both summer and fall of 2011 were filled with observations, workshops, and courses that all would benefit and guide thesis research. Most of the experiences were documented either while attending or shortly after attending the event through a thesis blog and were analyzed throughout the process as a longitudinal study of my own personal documentation. To see in depth analysis and the blog entries from each observation, refer to Appendix B: Observational Summaries on page 55.

It was important to understand where family historians were going to find information about their ancestors. In December of 2010, a visit to the Ohio Genealogical Society was necessary to conduct an observation. It was critical to observe the demographic
of potential users of the prototype being developed. It was through this observation that knowledge was gained that photographs drove family members to look into family history. There were large amounts of analog public records, but only a few stations for individuals to use computers and look up digital records from various databases. The record organization and navigation of the facility was a huge problem for patrons, who were already having enough trouble locating records on their family members.

In April of 2011, I attended the Ohio Genealogical Society 50th Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio. I used this opportunity to make contacts for possible interviews. At this conference I attended classes taught throughout the day by experts in the field and gathered a variety of secondary research resources. Throughout the conference I discovered that knowing locations in different family member’s life is important in tracing stories and family records.

In June of 2011, I was excepted through a highly competitive selection (only accepted 30 people) process to attend the three-day intensive training in the planning and implementation of public oral history projects. This event was called Catching Stories: Oral History Institute and was held at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. The curriculum included sessions on conceptualizing projects, the ethics of public research, framing interview questions, interview techniques, transcribing, archiving, and the use of technology. Sessions were taught by oral historians representing a variety of fields with extensive experience in public oral history projects.

In July of 2011, I attended a workshop called Developing User Empathy in Cleveland, Ohio. This compressed workshop included Visual Communication Design students as well as Information Architecture and Knowledge Management students working collaboratively to understand and utilize user empathy. This experience was crucial for my research to understand how to gain insight on the user needs for my prototype and to pick up additional problem solving skills in design research.

In late July of 2011, I attended a Genealogy, Local, and Public History workshop.
The workshop was an introduction for librarians and archivists to learn how to assist their genealogy patrons in a more informed manner. Information included learning the basics of the Census and Soundex, and how to locate and interpret vital records. Also introduced were guides to the most common genealogy web sites and instruction on how to use them effectively. Through mild persuasion I was allowed to take the workshop because of my thesis interest and gained invaluable insight on what librarians were being instructed to do to help patrons such as family historians and genealogists.

Throughout July and into August of 2011 I took a Grant Writing course in order to understand how to apply for grant money if I continued to develop my research further past graduation. It was in this course that I discovered how to create logic models which informed how to build research projection models for my thesis.

Finally, September through December of 2011, I enrolled in a course called Researching User Experience. This course provided invaluable secondary research gathered through provided links and videos. The course assignments allowed me to demonstrate and practice writing surveys and questionnaires before conducting them for my own thesis research. As with the User Empathy workshop, learning additional models and research tactics was beneficial to the research summary and data analysis portion of my thesis.

Survey

A 25 question Qualtrics survey was launched in October of 2011 that asked questions in regards to family history and self documentation practices. The survey was posted through a Wordpress.com splash page where interested participants could click a link to the survey. The survey was available to take from October 9, 2011 to the beginning of March 2012.

Only 59 participants completed the survey. The survey was posted on Facebook, sent as a link to all participants in the Oral History Institute workshop that was attended over the
summer as well as posted either through fliers or as a website link at various local libraries, including Akron-Summit County Public Library and the Hudson Library and Historical Society. The Akron-Summit library also posted the link on their Special Collections website as well as their Facebook page.

Attempts were made at the Kent Free Library, but unfortunately their policies restrict them from allowing flyers to be posted in regards to research. Following up with a response to the director of the Ohio Genealogical Society promising a listserv of 1,500 potential participants was also unsuccessful.

A full and detailed analysis of every question asked can be found in Appendix C: Survey Analysis starting on page 73. The following is a summary of the collected data.

The average age of the survey participant was 51.8 years old. This age is consistent with the audience and user group that regularly participates in family history research and documentation. 67% of survey participants were female. The majority gender is consistent with the gender of individual most likely to be conducting family history research according to secondary research and observations. Various questions such as employment status and location of where participant lives were asked in hopes of gaining insight into how busy the individual was with their job versus having time to conduct research as a leisure activity.

While 61% of participants are very interested in their family heritage, only 41% of survey participants are actively doing family history research. The leading reasons for participating in the research was to preserve memories of a deceased relative as well as generally having a strong interest in history. The majority of participants spend less than once a month doing family history research, and do so on their personal computer.

When documenting and recording their actual findings, the participants split between typing notes and storing them on their personal computers and making copies to keep in physical files. This behavior is consistent with secondary research and observations, ultimately leading to problems with keeping multi-media formats and frustration as to what
to do with the materials.

Working from home is on the rise with more and more records being digitized and more genealogy related material becoming available to the general public. The rate of materials becoming digitized according to interviews, secondary research, and observations is still very behind, making it necessary to visit other institutions holding analog records. 85% of survey participants reported working from home on their research.

58% of participants are working on research alone, an observation consistent with secondary research. There was no conclusive data regarding when research was usually conducted as percentages were almost even in regards to days, nights, and weekends. Through observations and interviews, individuals claim they fit in research when they can.

When asked the types of things individuals were looking for in regards to their research, answers such as knowing who their ancestors were and finding their stories were rampant. Other common inquiries included health histories, dates, locations, occupations, childhood stories, and accounts about what happened in their ancestors lifetime. Answers and desires were consistent with the disconnect of information that government documents and vital records do not provide and what individuals are actually seeking. Arguments can be made that it is up to families to be proactive in documenting their everyday lives so that future generations do not suffer as well.

Over 50% of participants responded that their interest in family history started at a young age to teenage years. It wasn't until much older in life that they acted or participated in this interest. The majority of participants started to actively participate between 30s to 50s. This question provided insufficient data as to why this was occurring. Without further investigation, only assumptions can be made at this time.

Almost even splits occurred when asking a level of interest in self documentation. 37% were somewhat interested, while 33% were very interested. 25% of participants were interested but didn't know where to start. Of the things that were being documented, 56% of
participants stated family members. The fact that the majority chose this topic is reassuring for the prototype being developed. 50% of participants chose life milestones, which is a key observation being that these are areas in which family historians are searching for with their ancestors.

When asking what methods one uses to capture memories or experiences, 87% reported taking photos. Taking photos to capture memories is consistent with the easiest and most popular easy that individuals are participating in documenting their daily lives and experiences through visual storytelling.

Finally, when asked what they felt were important things for future generations to know, participants answers ranged from day to day life, personal feelings, thinking and decisions made on a variety of issues, stories of success and overcoming difficult situations, family accomplishments and dreams, and how hard was life back then. Many participants were wanting to share how historical and generational defining moments were perceived and in the context of that event. Again, these views and desires are consistent with what individuals are looking for, but vital records and bureaucratic files rarely provide.

**Interviews**

Seven interviews were conducted throughout the thesis process with professionals who were specializing in a field relating to an area of secondary research that was being studied. The first few interviews started off very broad in hopes of netting themes or discussions that would help funnel my focus. As triangulation of various research methods occurred, patterns started to appear, making the choice for potential interviewees and discussion issues much easier.

Every subsequent interview built upon the other as decisions became more informed through other secondary and primary research means, as well as the questions being asked were more refined. Since it started to become clear where the research was heading, richer
information that was more relevant to my prototype was mined by the last interview.

To read transcripts from excerpts from each conducted interview and analysis of how each interview impacted the thesis research, refer to Appendix D: Interview Analysis on page 88. The following is a summary of the collected data.

Each individual interviewed provided a set of ideas to keep in mind while continuing secondary research. The first interviewee with a genealogist provided contacts as well as a change in perspective about what this research was actually looking at to document. The interview forced the research to start looking at the things being documented in a journalistic point of view rather than always in relation to social history. The second interviewee provided excellent literature sources as well as explained in greater detail the roles of an archivist and the difficulties their job entailed.

The interviewee provided not only insight on what it was like to be a librarian in special collections at a public library, but life as a researcher as well. This interview confirmed assumptions of self documentation and the panic of not participating in it as well as issues of privacy. This interview was also helpful in understanding the issues librarians are facing working with archivists, historians, and the general public.

The fourth interviewee introduced the idea of collective memory and how to document personal reflection. During this interviewee there was an awarded opportunity to understand in greater depth the importance of oral history to social historians and possible ways this tradition can still be carried out today in a digital age.

It wasn’t until interview five that assumptions were solidified that personal narratives and stories were extremely valuable and were what everyone was looking for. This interviewee allowed a glimpse of how archiving was being handled at a larger institution, and new ways this institution was combating issues in preserving analog and digital data.

Because of interview five and the pursuit of storytelling, it was encouraged to contact a well known and contemporary storyteller for their insights into how storytelling is
happening in a digital age. This interviewee also gave tips on how to inspire the users of the prototype being designed into generating content and inspiring others to share their stories.

The final interview with interviewee seven provided the information that was necessary in supporting the argument that photography was the number one memory making method that is shared by all audiences explored in this thesis process. The tradition of visual storytelling was confirmed in this interview which ultimately led to the development idea of the prototype.

**Triangulation of data**

Through a triangulation of observation and survey, review of related literature, and the transcripts of the interviews, there were areas of overlap and pattern. The apparent truth that was created as a result of the overlaps needed to be considered when starting the final phase, which was prototype development.

The analysis thus far in the thesis process revealed:

- discovering lives of ordinary people (mostly family members) is a top priority
- photography is number one that drives searching the past and capturing the present
- searchers have background or a strong interest in history
- concern and panic to preserve memories starts with the passing of a loved one
- stories, captions, annotations, hold the most value
- individuals are so buried in the past, they have not considered the present
- privacy and sensitivity of data is a huge concern

The following is a diagram that shows the areas of overlap, revealing the final areas the research needed to focus on when working in the prototype stage.
RESEARCH TRIANGULATION DIAGRAM

RESEARCH TRIANGULATION DIAGRAM

OBSERVATIONS + SURVEY
(family historians, everyday people)

Trying to discover:
- what persons life was like
- personalities
- health history
- bio information
- locations of family members, where they traveled in lifetime
- life concerns and daily activities
- reasons behind decisions made (name change, moving around, immigrating)
- what did they look like
- where people are buried

Important for future to know:
- day to day existence
- personal feelings of current events
- my memories and how that shaped me
- health issues
- feelings and conflicts
- goals and dreams
- love stories, funny stories
- job history and accomplishments

- earlier childhood to early teens when interest started, acted on it in 30+
- age 30-80s are researching/concerned
- of all the things to document number one is family members
- social media is how people are documenting themselves if at all today
- more than ever people want to share and be heard
- people searching for connections and networks like never before
- irritated searching, want info all in one spot
- keep and use mostly analogue things
- preserving memories are vital
- capturing accounts immediately as they happen are more valuable
- digital data hard to work with + store, “too new and too much”
- accuracy and authenticity is critical
- accurate social histories capture generational defining moments

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTERVIEWS
Archivists, Genealogists, Librarians, Historians

APPARENT TRUTH

- Discovering lives of ordinary people (mostly family members) is top priority.
- Photography is number one that drives searching in past and capturing present.
- Searcher has background or strong interest in history.
- Concern/panic to preserve memories starts with the passing of a loved one, when often times it is too late.
- Stories, captions, annotations hold the most value.
- Buried so deep in past, have not considered present. Have “no time.”
- Privacy and sensitivity of data is a huge concern.

Figure 2. Research triangulation diagram.
Comparative Analysis

Through the course of this thesis, it was necessary to explore other applications and sites that were pursuing similar initiatives as this research. In regards to building a prototype, site and application patterns were studied to gain better insight into current usability practices and contemporary solutions.

A wide variety of sites and apps were chosen to compare and contrast, as well as analysis conducted on how the prototype that was created could meet the needs that currently weren’t being met. It was also necessary to discover if any other applications or initiatives were similar to the prototype that was being developed, and what their strengths and weaknesses were if found.

Two comparative analyses were completed to explore other applications and sites. Part one of the analysis compared other sites and approaches that were similar in some way to the need this research was striving to meet. Part two of the analysis explored features that would be beneficial or could be repurposed in the development of the prototype. A complete analysis of the various sites chosen to research can be found in Appendix E: Comparative Analysis starting on page 106.

There are many applications and websites that are currently perpetuating the endeavor of personal documentation in some shape or form. Fourteen of these tools and resources were studied over the course of this thesis to understand their features and functionality. Additional research is needed to understand the users of these sites and apps and the reasons they have chosen to use them in their everyday lives.

Four mobile apps, Path, ShoeBox, Storytree, and Instagram were researched in depth and chosen because of their function in journaling or capturing photos through cell phone photography. Ten websites were analyzed for a unique feature that was related to the prototype being developed, or that their mission was similar in the way of personal documentation and family history. The ten sites reviewed included Cowbird, StoryCorps,
Dear Photograph, LiveOn, 1000 Memories, Ancestry, CNN iReport, Pinterest, Facebook Timeline, and First Person American.

**User Personas**

Before starting on the prototype design it was important to understand the needs of the prototype’s users. It is then that features and functionality can be identified that will determine the success of the application as well as support users with various skill sets and goals.

Although fictitious, personas were created based on knowledge of real users. These personas help to try and identify user motivations, expectations, and goals.

Through the triangulation of sections of the research, six archetypal users were created to help direct the vision and usability of the prototype. In the near future, various usability tests will be conducted to go more in depth with user behaviors and to ultimately gather insight as to the level of interest in this project.

At this time, rich narrative personas were not created, although the following personas still do the job of focusing on certain aspects of the prototype. With actual user testing the existing personas will be able to become better defined, expanded and potentially added to.

With the current personas, data was coded to map overlaps in behaviors and attitudes of various users being studied. From these maps, insight can be gathered from the groupings to determine how certain features could benefit certain groups of users.

To see a complete breakdown of the user personas and the various maps, refer to Appendix F: User Personas that starts on page 114.
Chapter IV

Results

Prototype

Designing of the prototype came very late into the thesis process. It was decided that photography and visual storytelling were areas that were going to be expanded upon, narrowing down a design focus.

Throughout the entire wireframing and design process, secondary research never stopped. Continual analysis and discovery of new apps and tools that people were using that were already successfully documenting user’s personal journeys and narratives was never ending. Research that would have been helpful to have analyzed earlier in the thesis process. These applications were being discovered as research narrowed down in focus, ultimately leaving a window to develop a prototype in less than a month.

Part way through the development of the prototype, designing and implementation came to a halt. It was decided after looking at the first half of the research that not enough primary research was done in the areas of documenting today. It is necessary to study users who are currently practicing self documentation or family documentation and understand the tools they were using and why.

Design decisions made on the prototype were beginning to be based on assumptions because of the lack of insight from actual users. Until more primary research is done, design and development will be put on hold. After a design is completed, user testing will be conducted, adding additional insight and feedback from potential users.

The initial design and application idea is still very worthy of being discussed and explored. Plans to pick up primary research and the continuation of design and development are underway upon the completion of this thesis oral defense.
Prototype development

An application was sketched out that would help families that were interested in documenting personal histories do so in a more manageable way. A model was based off of an observation by the late genealogist Harriet Strykar-Rodda. When her work was first discovered during this thesis, it was unclear if she was still living. I immediately contacted the publishing company from which her works were published and was regretfully informed that she was in fact no longer living. It was important to reach out to her and gather her thoughts on the design approach in tribute to her fascinating observation.

After many rounds of naming, the prototype was finally called First Hand. Not only does Mrs. Strykar-Rodda's observation revolve around the human hand, the concept for capturing and recording personal narratives is to capture them immediately because you were there, first-hand.

About First Hand

(The following description would be addressing users on the site)

Looking through old family photographs, we find that we wish we knew who were in the photos, or when they were taken. We seem to take many photos, but never have the time to label any of them.

Have you ever stopped and wondered how your family members will find you in the future? How will you be remembered? What are you doing today to document your life?

Some of our best memories are recorded as soon as they happen. Wouldn't it be great to share these memories with your family members all in one place? Now you can with First Hand.

First Hand is the best way to store and secure these cherished memories and personal stories. Using your phone, you can capture photos, video, and audio of your loved ones and upload them directly to your family account. What makes these memories great is the fact
that you were there to capture them first-hand.

Do not wait to start capturing first-hand experiences today. Your future family members will be glad that you did.

**How First Hand works**

(The following description would be addressing users on the site)

The late genealogist Harriet Strykar-Rodda had the following observation regarding the easiest way to start your family history research.

“Open your left hand. Let your middle finger represent yourself. Let the index finger represent your parents; the thumb, your grandparents. Let the ring finger represent your children, if you have any, and the little finger, your grandchildren. Your right hand can represent your spouse’s family in the same way. Looking at the long middle finger, you can see how, as middleman, you are in a position, usually from your own knowledge, to re-create three generations--yours, your parents' and your grandparents'. Add to that the knowledge of your children and grandchildren as they arrive and you and your spouse, the middlemen, will each become the link among five generations—that is, three on your side and three on his or hers—to two current generations: your children and grandchildren. Gathering that knowledge to pass on is the beginning of the search into your family’s history.”

Excerpt from: *How to Climb Your Family Tree: Genealogy for Beginners*

First Hand has taken this observation to a new level, creating a model that can be used to capture present day family memories today.

Virtually everyone agrees you begin your family history with yourself. Why? Because you and your relatives are an enormously rich source of information about your family.

As you take photos of you and your family, you will upload them to your account.
Here, you can add captions, stories, and locations to these memories. By tagging the photos, these memories will be pushed into those individual’s pages. Overtime, each family member will start to develop a database of stories about them, by them, as well as shared by them giving a 360 degree profile on their life.

In the future, your loved one will gain a greater understand of you as an individual as well as your personality as the whole family contributes to your life story. Various memories, experiences, stories, and opinions will provide the discoverer a profile on their ancestor like never before, created by the collective memory of your family.
First Hand is a private place to share and collect stories of your family for future generations.

Sign in
Email
Password
Forgot password?
Sign in

New to First Hand?
Sign up

Figure 3. First Hand logo and home page.
Figure 4. First Hand account set-up screen.

Figure 5. First Hand profile set-up screen.
Figure 6. First Hand sample profile page.

Figure 7. First Hand 5 Generation model.
NOTE: With every user being responsible for their five select groups, the documenting of the family tree becomes more manageable and the overlaps between participants makes sure everyone’s life stories are accounted for.

Figure 8. First Hand 5 Generation demo.
Figure 9. First Hand Relationship model.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grandparents</th>
<th>Father’s side</th>
<th>Mother’s side</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grandfather</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Richard Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️ User has First Hand account</td>
<td>✔️ User has First Hand account</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthday</td>
<td>Birthday</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✔️ User has First Hand account</td>
<td>✔️ User has First Hand account</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Users fill out very basic forms about their five group members. Once those individuals join, FirstHand takes care of the rest, including labeling the relationships of past and future relatives.

Figure 10. First Hand sample data entry for individual family members.
Figure 11. First Hand Relationship model results.

NOTE: As your five groups begin to be developed, nodes will be created by other users to access their FirstHands. If a group will be added to in the future, it will notify you with a place holder circle.
NOTE: Users will be able to click on other user’s FirstHands to access their groups. At a glance one can see how quickly a family tree can be unraveled clicking just one relative’s FirstHand group.

Traditional family trees only show paternal and maternal bloodlines. Rarely are other relationships shown such as siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Figure 12. First Hand Relationship model expanded.
NOTE: Eventually FirstHand will grow to more multimedia storytelling methods. Currently the focus is on visual storytelling.

Figure 13. First Hand sample photo gallery.
Figure 14. First Hand sample photo story.
NOTE: Features such as tagging and adding keywords is crucial for the success of FirstHand to be able to accurately share personal stories.

Figure 15. First Hand sample tagging feature.
Chapter V
Opportunities and Conclusion

Conclusion

After reflecting on this thesis it was interesting to find that in a small way this research fell into the trap of not keeping up with the present, just like the user group that was being studied. Efforts into understanding how and why information was being recorded in the past, and trying to understand how that has changed with the advent of digital technology was where most of this thesis attention was concentrated.

Throughout the thesis process, new apps and websites were already existing that were aiding people in documenting the present, and it wasn't until later in the research that they were discovered.

While further development progresses on the First Hand prototype, a new direction in primary and secondary research has emerged as it is necessary to start looking at the individuals who are using journal or documentary apps and find out how they found out about them. Assumptions suggest that many people aren’t aware of the many tools that are out there that can help preserve their memories. It is necessary to take a look at how effective they are in terms of usability and usefulness to families and historians.

It is vital to keep in touch with the ways in which archives are using born digital information, ultimately making the prototype that is created extremely valuable for the rich histories that are developed. Features such as story and photography annotation as well as searchable keywords is proving to be taking steps in the right direction.

Not only should the prototype be useful and valuable for families, but should be useful to social historians as well. Tools are out there to create well documented histories and testimonies, but not quite in the right combination. By combining the features described in the comparative analysis and user testing the developed prototype, there is no doubt that First Hand will be a great success.
Appendices
Appendix A
Research Projection Chart
## RESEARCH PROJECTION CHART

### Created August 2011

**NOTE:** a chart was necessary to create to map out a checklist of areas I wished to target and manage my efforts on in order to finish the thesis project on time.
## RESEARCH PROJECTION CHART

### AIMEE CRANE
M.F.A. GRADUATE THESIS, IRB# 11-175 (May 2011–April 2012)
Study Title: Capturing the Present, Engaging the Future: Designing a Social History Network in a Digital Age

### Research + Design Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC/CONCEPT</th>
<th>PROPOSAL</th>
<th>SECONDARY RESEARCH</th>
<th>PRIMARY RESEARCH</th>
<th>DATA ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open exploration to find a design opportunity.</td>
<td>After extensive literature review and topic chosen, draft proposal to send to IRB.</td>
<td>Research will carry through until writing of thesis paper.</td>
<td>Research to validate assumptions and inform development of prototype.</td>
<td>Synthesis of data aggregated from surveys, questionnaires, and interviews for use in development of prototype.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Research + Design strategies

- Advanced Design Research course
- Advanced Design Research course
- Comparative analysis
- Quantitative methods
- Data visualizations
- Heuristic evaluations
- Qualitative methods
- Data visualizations
- Ethnographic research
- Data visualizations
- Related topic conferences
- Ethnographic research
- Related topic workshops
- Ethnographic research
- User personas
- Ethnographic research

### Research + Design tactics

- Research blog
- Research blog
- Literature reviews
- Surveys
- Infographics
- Pattern library database
- Questionnaires
- User experience maps
- Observational research
- Interviews
- User personas
- Research logic model
- Concept model(s)
- Demographic data
- User personas

### To do list

- update process blog
- write proposal
- edits and revisions
- IRB review
- IRB approval
- organize paperwork
- organize thesis committee
- wrap up lit review
- complete pattern library
- complete comp. analysis
- set up observation locations
- finalize models
- rewrite survey questions
- rewrite interview questions
- launch online survey
- create paper version
- set up interviews from strategic list
- recruit user testing participants
- create visualizations from data collected
- develop user maps
# RESEARCH PROJECTION CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROTOTYPE DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>USER TESTING</th>
<th>DATA ANALYSIS</th>
<th>WRITE THESIS PAPER</th>
<th>ORAL DEFENSE AND FUTURE OF RESEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artifact to demonstrate user need in design problem.</td>
<td>Method to validate and evaluate prototype.</td>
<td>Synthesis of data aggregated from user testing prototype as well as process reflection. (efficiency, accuracy, recall, and emotional response)</td>
<td>Start paper end of fall semester, carry over until February.</td>
<td>Defending thesis research to thesis committee.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site visualizations</th>
<th>Usability testing</th>
<th>Data visualizations</th>
<th>Thesis paper</th>
<th>Oral defense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annotated wireframes</th>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th>Outline guide</th>
<th>Presentation and copies of deliverables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Site blueprints</td>
<td></td>
<td>Literature review notecards and sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- design portions of site
- define task to test
- paper prototype creation
- clickable pdf for demo
- write task script
- define scenarios
- determine data collection methods
- develop research metrics or analytics to determine if prototype was successful or not
- create research summary document
- write paper
- writing center thesis appointment
- review with committee
- commit + present
- design presentation and deliverables
- schedule oral defense for mid-March, early April
- submit abstracts for conferences and journals
- submit thesis to KSU database
Appendix B
Observational Summaries
It wasn’t until I started talking with my mom before winter break about her family history research that I started to change my ideas on my thesis topic. My mother had received all of these family photos a few years ago after my great grandmother passed away. She was very interested in putting names to faces and expanding our little knowledge about our family tree. After going to the Ohio Genealogical Society with my mom one time out of curiosity, I immediately saw a huge opportunity and design problem emerging as I watched the patrons struggle to locate and work with the public records held there.

The two biggest complaints I heard when it comes to individual research surrounding family history is the lack of digital files, as well as the overall organization of the materials. There is no rhyme or reason to the way public records are organized. Most records are still in print, and if you don’t find what you are looking for in one location, one must travel all over to track down files. I witnessed volunteers cutting out obituaries from local papers, then gluing them to notecards and filing them in little drawers. It was amazing the amount of space wasted as well as the time to put those together. The visitors also complained that whatever they gathered, they had to end up typing or scanning it at home for their records. My mom took a tour of the place before, and still got lost. She wished she had a map. She wished there was a touch screen kiosk that she could go to and search for things. She also mentioned how much she enjoyed touch screen things, as do a lot lot of older people. She expressed how enjoyable and easy voting was this year with the touch screen booths. I found the entire process and experience fascinating as well as troubling and overwhelming all at the same time.

I feel that there is a huge need with information architecture and knowledge management at most of these places, but what can I do? The entire process seemed too big to tackle in a thesis. I decided that I liked this idea about learning how these types of things are done, and developing something for the future. I also liked how this topic touches on so many other disciplines. In the future, it would be great if I could take the research
I developed and applied it to a type of 3D application, such as a museum exhibit or informational kiosks that could be used at libraries and various historical societies. I have a feeling this topic and research will carry me far in years to come.

Analysis: March 2012

- photos drove family member to look into family history
- decided to start research at the largest state genealogical society in the U.S. instead of online or asking family members
- lack of digital files
- record organizational and navigational system a huge problem
- archival space an issue
- mix media an issue for patrons: analog to digital translation
- wayfinding issues inside building
- use of touch screens, kiosk would be helpful
- topic choice seems too broad
- brainstorming tactics instead of problem solving solutions
I just got back from the Ohio Genealogical Conference held in Columbus, Ohio. My mother and I attended the Friday session of the three-day event. We spent 9-5 visiting the vendors and buying books and charts and then each attended three classes in the afternoon. I ventured off and met a lot of interesting historians, researchers, and family historians. My mother was able to get some of her questions answered for her own personal research which was fantastic.

I attended a class about how to use maps, atlases, and gazetteers more efficiently in personal research. The session really opened my eyes to how to implicate the use of those visuals in my prototype that I plan on creating. From listening to the question and answer sessions between the audience and the speaker, it seems older people go crazy over atlases, and especially gazetteers. The audience was extremely knowledgeable about how to get the most out of them, and how to read between the lines in the data. The second class I attended was about Google Earth and genealogy. This class blew my mind, and showed me ways to use Google Earth that I never could imagine. The demos were absolutely incredible. I can’t wait to order the lecturer’s DVDs and try this out for myself. The last class I went to was a lecture on Lord Dunmore’s War, and how it was such an important war, but is rarely talked about. I found it worthy to attend for many of my ancestors fought in it. Junior high Ohio History was all flooding back.

It was amusing to be the youngest person in attendance out of hundreds of attendees. Everyone was easily 50 or much older. I was stared at a lot, which was interesting since it happened frequently when my mother and I split up. A lot of questioning looks as if I were lost or stumbled into territory that I didn’t belong in. When my mother and I were together, the amount of smiles increased. Since we look so much alike, people put two and two together. It was a great mother/daughter thing to do and be a part of.

What was great is the Ohio Genealogical Society (OGS) sponsored the Conference. They are located in Belleville, Ohio which is seven miles from where I live. We saw many of the volunteers at the Conference.
that my mom visits in Belleville. We feel fortunate that we live so close to the headquarters research library, for we heard many who attended the Conference say they came from far away and have never had the chance to visit the library in Belleville. My mother visits the center as often as she can.

I did meet a researcher and archivist from the Ohio Historical Society who was fairly young which was exciting. We talked about my thesis proposal and she was very enthusiastic and was interested in learning more about it. I hope to interview her this summer and visit the Ohio Historical Society. All in all this was a great experience and the amount of research, literature, and new perspectives on some ideas I had was plenty to walk away with. Next year, the OGS Conference will be in Cleveland. I hope to attend this one as well.

Analysis: March 2012

• wanted to incorporate some time of location feature in my prototype
• location is big in family storytelling and tracing family records
• demographic is consistently older generations
• archivist I met at conference I actually got to interview 12-22-11
Catching Stories: Oral History Institute

excerpt: from blog post "Day 1: Catching Stories- Oral History Institute" posted June 7, 2011 from cranethesisblog.wordpress.com

We dove right into the workshop at 12:30, meeting at an academic hall just over a hill from where everyone is staying. I am feeling a little overwhelmed since I am way out of my element with my educational background and expertise, but I keep an open mind. Everyone got to share a snippet of what they are working on, be it a research initiative or oral history project. The diversity of topics was absolutely fascinating.

The presentations/lectures given by the speakers were outstanding. The topics have ranged from "why do oral history?" to planning oral history projects, to how to make the most out of interviewing individuals. The other great addition to the workshop is getting the opportunity to work on a group project and actually test out and apply the skills we are learning into a mini oral history project.

This whole time, I am constantly thinking about how this relates to my thesis topic. I am worried that my idea is too broad. The thing is, I have to remind myself that I am not studying a specific topic or area using oral history, but merely trying to understand what it is, how it is used, and the value in it. As a designer and younger person, I can't help but look at this tool through a different lens. I have questions about are there other ways to capture history more efficiently, immediately, easier, etc.

It seems that doing oral history is a lot of work. Knowing my generation, doing something that requires effort is met with resistance and disinterest. I see the value of doing oral histories, but do other's my age? I can't imagine a peer in school wanting to pick up a recorder and interview another person. I can't see people in my generation caring about anything but themselves and what's happening right now. Maybe a handful, but not many. I think this is what has driven my focus about doing oral histories on oneself in a way. We use social media, blogging, etc anyway to express ourselves and network with others. Can this energy be repurposed in a more meaningful and useful way for the future-creating in theory a more accurate and interactive social histories.
I am hoping to gather insight from the experts here about their views on capturing today for tomorrow and the future. I am totally not discounting the value and logic behind doing these wonderful interviews. I wonder what the dangers are of doing interviews or recording data yourself. What I mean is, (thinking of my prototype) can individuals log on to something and either write or upload videos or recording of themselves talking about a topic or an idea? Do you run the risk of amateur results and files and data that is useless for the masses? Is there a way to have checks and balances so that what individuals are uploading isn’t crap, but yet there is some freedom to how they want to capture themselves or others? Why is this important? Who cares?

I have some thoughts about regulating and controlling data that I will save for another day. I read so much about authority and legitimization of historical data and sources that I wonder if the technique of doing oral histories is traditionally the standard and best way of gathering correct data? Is this the best way? Is it outdated?

My head is swimming with ideas. Is this my place to question these thoughts? Sometimes as a designer I wonder what gives me a right to challenge another profession, especially an area such as history and archiving, which is an area I know little about.

It was amazing the response I got explaining my purpose for attending this workshop to fellow participants. At first being met with confusion, (which I expected) but then general interest and excitement for my ideas.

Analysis: March 2012

- gaining interviewing and transcribing experience was invaluable
- I am still researching ways to capture audio but decided to focus on photography
- questions asked are legitimate, is uploaded accounts the truth or the Truth
- consistently educating people outside my area of design about what design research and thinking is, continually met with confusion and skepticism
I apologize for the delay of my post this week. One of the interesting things about the institute at Kenyon was the lack of internet access. It was a problem that we dealt with the three days there. It wasn't huge deal, but it was inconvenient at times.

Now that I am back home, I have had some time to think and digest all the wonderful knowledge and skills I have acquired from the experience. I will post some thoughts below. I plan on just covering the highlights, and not go into too much details with the lectures and sessions. It wouldn't make much sense unless you were there.

Day 2: June 8, 2011

Today was the day we really dug in and got to interview individuals with digital tape recorders and microphones. The previous evening we got to watch a mock interview being conducted, and gathered some tips on some common mistakes interviewers make. I interviewed a person a little older than me, and learned a lot about her in just a short ten minutes. Later we would be transcribing the interview we conducted and putting it together with the rest of our team members to create a public oral history project.

During the lecture sessions from the day before, I kept thinking how labor intensive and expensive conducting oral history interviews was, and how tedious it would be to transcribe them. We learned that it takes eight times the duration of the interview to transcribe it. So if you interviewed someone for an hour, it would take around eight hours to write it up. That is incredible! We learned the value of doing transcriptions, be it for a hard copy to go with an audio recording, used with a finding aide, or creating a physical piece that can be held and edited or if on the computer, be used on the web. I had done transcriptions before from interviews I had conducted in the past, but never to this level and refinement. What I also found that was interesting is that the transcriptions are considered primary sources themselves. They hold the same weight as the audio or video file that it was created from. This is great to know as I continue with my research.
OBSERVATION SUMMARIES

In the evening my group came up with a great concept to present our project. We wanted to make sure it was generic, so any audience could enjoy it. We had a very strong emotional theme to it too. I was starting to realize how interesting it was to pull common threads from just doing as little as four interviews, and creating a project out of it. I can’t imagine what one could do with hundreds of interviews, money, and time to put it all together.

Day 3: June 9, 2011

Today included more lecture sessions, and presentations of our projects. Throughout the three day event, it was amazing to get so close to all these people and learn so much about everyone’s background. I made a large number of contacts and connections, handing out my research/business card in hopes of contacting individuals for my thesis research.

I felt like I took a giant leap outside my comfort zone attending a workshop that wasn’t close to my expertise. As I observed more throughout the workshop, I realized how my skills as a communicator were being utilized in the process. I was thankful for the chance to not only represent Kent State at the workshop, but also the School of VCD. I look forward to opportunities to not only represent my university, but my school as well. When I first arrived and was asked about my project, I was met with confusion, and then interest. I was also met with, “you can do a poster board for us- you’re an artist!” By the end of the three days I felt I was accepted—being that I came here and went through the entire process like everyone else as an outsider, as well as proving through the effectiveness of our presentation, that I could do more to move an audience with a well thought out and art directed presentation instead of a piece of poster board and some markers.

It wasn’t until the very end and the various groups were presenting that I started to realize some things. It was exciting to feel the energy in the room as the groups were so excited to show what they have done. The efforts of collaboration were smothering the room, almost to the point of making people giddy. I tend to run into this in workshops with older adults. They get so excited like they are in school once again. Below are some ideas I was thinking about at the time:
We are not all designers

I have been to workshops or lectures before where I have been one of the younger ones in attendance. I find it fascinating to see how others (especially older adults) use creativity or how groups express themselves with a few guidelines and some materials. In this workshop, we had a very limited amount of time, and the end presentation was entirely up to you. It was interesting to see which groups struggled with the lack of boundaries, and which groups really went all out. I also saw instances and mistakes I see my students make, telling the whole back story to the process; focusing on the hang ups and hold ups or apologizing for your lack of knowledge of technology. Just present! I don't want to focus on the negative! You have done all this work, now let's see what you have! As groups presented I kept thinking, how powerful and effective people's personal projects would be if a designer was onboard. Someone to be able to take all of their hard work, and translate it into something worthwhile and amazing to communicate to the public. I heard so many stories throughout the workshop about wonderful ideas and projects that were accomplished, only to have fallen apart by the end because of lack of marketing or lack of effective design in the final presentation. It's a shame having these wonderful projects being conducted, only to be met with disinterest because of a breakdown in communication (visual or otherwise), especially to the audience.

Listening to the audio

Some groups decided to take snippets of their interviews that they recorded, and play them at strategic points during their presentation. It was a thrill to hear the voices of the people I had gotten to know for the past three days, and the richness of the stories they had to share. It inspired me to want to go out and interview people whenever I have the chance. It was exciting to hear the diversity of the voices and personality, and that both interviewer and interviewee were enthusiastic about the information being exchanged. It finally made sense why the lecturers were so enthusiastic about doing these interviews and why listeners love the stories, such as ones told on NPR. I kept thinking of in the past how stories were passed on and how enjoyable it is to slow down in life, stop and listen. I also feel like if more people (young people) were exposed to this type of media, they might find it enjoyable and
maybe learn a few things from others. No one takes the time to stop and listen anymore. This experience solidified for me how important it was to do these interviews, and how valuable they truly were.

This is a lot of work

I spoke with one of my thesis committee members and one of the lecturers for this workshop, Steven Paschen about expenses with doing these types of projects. I wish to talk with him more about his thoughts on the pros and cons of doing these interviews the seemingly right way—meeting up with a person and interviewing them with nice equipment vs someone sitting on a laptop and recording themselves, potentially uploading to a site (like my prototype). I still feel that anything that requires effort will be avoided by young people, or they might feel like they have nothing to say. I am very curious how I can use my skills as a designer to communicate and persuade young people that we all have something to say and that we each are valuable. I continue to work on various comparative analyses that study what kinds of programs are out there that let individuals do this type of uploading themselves, and how effective they are. We as a generation seem to want to express ourselves through blogging and social media. Can we do this (with some guidance) and create more accurate social histories in the future?

Where is all this stuff?

One of my design professors stated in my candidacy review (after hearing my thesis topic) that she always imagined the stories that were told on NPR were locked away in dusty boxes or vaults buried deep within underground rooms. Most likely behind locked doors in the Library of Congress, much like a scene from an Indiana Jones film. I first thought this was funny and absurd but I am starting to feel this way myself. I step outside my mission with my thesis frequently and try to imagine myself as a person doing family history. Where do I begin? Maybe I want to listen to stories of people during the Great Depression, when my great-grandparents lived. Where do I go? There is not one place on the internet or a library that I can think of that might house this information. One lecturer at the workshop showed us her university’s website and all the great work they had done with
transcripts and audio from their interviews. I would never think to go there to find something. The entire searching process doesn't feel intuitive to me. As a young person, I pride myself in my searching ability and endurance I have being that I will go a very long time without giving up if I need that one book or one article. Knowing my mother, she too will go for days, weeks searching for something in vain about a relative or ancestor, exhausting all possible options until she must move on. I know of others who if they can't find something in a few clicks, they're done. I only assume elderly individuals would be the same way, getting easily frustrated and give up.

Maybe because I am outside this world that I don't see all the resources that are out there. Maybe it is right there and I am looking at all the wrong things. Speaking with archivists, librarians, family historians, etc. I get a few names or resources here and there that hold information but nothing that is the end all be all, Google-like status that has everything. Again, something I looking at with my prototype, being an aggregator of some sort to grab all of these wonderful sites with audio, video, information, so people aren't having to search all over the place for resources. I want to build a tool that people can use to get their information, but also add to it themselves. I want something that libraries, museums, archives participate in so that everything is connected and everyone benefits. The more I think about it, the bigger this idea keeps getting.

**It's what you do with it**

Finally, one of the other things I learned that you can do so much with these interviews and it all depends on your final project. You might gather interviews and create an awareness or public service campaign. You might take your interviews and create a documentary. You might create something that changes the view on a particular subject or even a destination. Oral histories are one of many tools that can be used in storytelling. I also learned how important it is to think about the future, and to save everything in as many formats as possible to open up doors for creative people in the future.

I am so glad that I attended this institute and will be sure to recommend it to others. So many of my questions were answered, and I left with so many more that I want to ask. I can't wait to keep reflecting on this experience,
and hopefully bug Professor Paschen with some ideas once I get back to Kent. I know I didn’t cover everything that I wanted to in this post, and I am sure I will bring up more thoughts in future posts.

**Analysis: March 2012**

- did not post right away, gave time for reflection
- transcriptions are super helpful and are considered a primary source
- transcriptions take awhile, but are great and searchable
- common thread of history background among many of participants
- again one of the youngest participants (only one of the 30 was younger than me)
- audio: personality and diversity of voice and sound is very rich
- storytelling was a key element of successful projects
- records and files still very hard to find in public archives
- oral histories can be expensive projects and very time consuming
Developing User Empathy

**No blog posts were created for this experience**

**Workshop description:**

*Conducting user research is a valuable practice to help teams of designers create meaningful and relevant communication, products and services. How can we investigate the problem before we solve it? This workshop will explore the process, thinking and practices that help communication designers develop and utilize user empathy. Working rapidly and collaboratively, creative teams will seek to understand the lives of their users and learn to meaningfully attach that understanding to the work they generate for that audience. This workshop will demonstrate methods for conducting research, analyzing data, and user-centered ideation.*

Teams were given an assignment and allowed to pick a user group from an approved list. The following day was spent gathering data from observations and conducting interviews with people in and around the Cleveland area. A final deliverable was then to be created using a Conifer Research research model and presented at the workshop on the final day.

**Analysis: March 2012**

- user research is critical for my prototype  
- various models should be considered to demonstrate design research  
- first real experience interacting with users and using a model  
- designers working with user experience designers was insightful

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**Developing User Empathy**

Cleveland, Ohio  
*July 8–10, 2011*  
Type: Workshop

Workshop was put on by Conifer Research of Chicago, Illinois. Conifer Research brings insight to companies that seek to change and innovate, helping clients inform their creativity with scientific insights into the real lives of customers and users.

**Impact on research:**

This compressed workshop included Visual Communication Design students as well as Information Architecture and Knowledge Management students working collaboratively to understand and utilize user empathy.

Was crucial for my research to understand how to gain insight on the user needs for my prototype and to pick up additional problem solving skills in design research.
Genealogy, Local and Public History

excerpt: from blog post “You cannot know your country unless your country knows you” posted
July 24, 2011 from cranethesisblog.wordpress.com

What a weekend. Friday and Saturday I attended a Genealogy, Local and Public History workshop. The workshop was very interesting and was designed for librarians to take to guide them in helping patrons with genealogy requests. As an outsider, I was intrigued by how the instructor was going to go about explaining how to help the public look for information since I have my own experiences how I have been helped. It was a nice refresher as well on the many topics that were covered, most of which I am very familiar with now having gone to the Ohio Genealogical Conference in Columbus as well as watching my mother struggle with our family history.

The instructor spent a lot of time on talking about the census and how important this is. Now only for government and historical purposes, but it has keys to social history. She gave us “cheat sheets” of blank census forms from 1820 to about 1930. I was fascinated by the questions asked and the amount of information that was extracted from these. The instructor went on about how census forms and style changes all the time. She talked about in year 2000, one in six families were lucky enough to fill out a long form that asked really great in-depth social questions while everyone else filled out regular forms. She also talked about how in 2010, everyone just filled out generic simple short forms that didn’t ask much at all. She talked about the government just needed data for taxation and representation, and that was about it. She was so saddened as a librarian and archivist for the people in the future getting this data, and having nothing to work with.

I was floored. Why should it be “lucky enough” to get one of these forms? This should be standard! She went on and talked about census workers go out to different highly populated areas every once in awhile to gather social data between census years. They don’t however go to places with populations less than 5,000. I am sitting there in class staring at this lady in disbelief. I thought of the town I grew up in with 2,500 people, and how they would be skipped over, as if they didn’t exist if this madness is true.

The instructor went on and talked about how census records are sealed for
72 years in the US and how genealogists and historians and foaming at the mouth, anxious to get their hands on 1940 next April 2. Mentioning this to my mom, she shared the same enthusiasm.

Am I missing something here? The whole time I am listening to this, I am thinking what are we waiting for? Why do we as a people have to wait years and years to get data? Not only that, but rely on the government to do it for us? I understand there is privacy involved and that is why we must wait so long (for people to pass on usually) but still.

I wasn’t the only one confused and outraged in the group. Many librarians spoke up mentioning things such as the Works Projects Administration (WPA) projects in the 1930s and 1940s and the Federal Writers’ Project (FWP) publications. Why aren’t we doing this all the time?

I need to look into this issue further before I jump to conclusions. It was just disappointing how much time is wasted and how much we are missing because the government decides what questions to ask or what to record and collect. I have been reading a lot lately how vital records were designed by lawyers, judges, clerks, and how social historians can’t get a lot of info from these. Looks like another thesis right there.

Anyway, we watched a promo video about the 1940s census to get us excited for when it actually is released. At the end, the narrator says “You cannot know your country unless your country knows you!” I laughed out loud in class (embarrassingly) thinking how ironic that was. How sad it will be for the future if we don’t have any data to work with.

Check out this awesome promo video below about the 1940s census. I can’t wait until they are released and to see what all the excitement is. [youtube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cImIlPSuyR8]

Analysis: March 2012

- discovered the types of information the government was collecting on citizens
- families need to start collecting data, government won’t
- still researching the WPA and FWP work—why has it stopped?
- how can the country ”know” us relying just on statistical census data?
Grant Writing

No blog posts were created for this experience

Course description:

Preparing a grant proposal is about preparing a clear narrative that matches a good idea with a well described and important need that meets a funding agency’s priority. Today’s fiscal climate requires that professionals in public health, education and social services have such skills.

Taught in course how to review grant proposals using specific review guidelines, prepare logic models, how to find a funding match and finally, how to write a grant proposal.

Analysis: March 2012

• seriously considering building this prototype into a fully functioning website and app
• made contacts through this course and resources to apply for funding
• gained tools to write a successful proposal and will submit after additional research and user testing is complete

Grant Writing
Kent State University
July 11–August 2011
Type: Online course

Provided by the Graduate Educational Administration at Kent State University and taught by Dr. R. Scott Olds

Impact on research:
Logic models created informed how to build research projection models.
Researching User Experience

No blog posts were created for this experience

Course description:

Design research seeks to understand user needs, goals and tasks. Deals with research methods for human-centered design of information-rich artifacts and experiences. Covers interviews, surveys, diary studies and other methods applicable to the formative stages of the design process. Students learn to distill research findings into audience segments, user profiles, personas, scenarios and other documents that model user behavior.

Course was critical as a designer to understand the big picture of user research: what it is, why we do it, the ways it can be approached, and how the various research methods and processes relate to each other.

Learned extensively about writing surveys and questionnaires, writing open and closed questions, and how to conduct user interviews, create screeners and user segments. Was taught how to code data and find patterns in user research, and how to create better user personas.

Analysis: March 2012

- this class should be a required course for all VCD grad students
- provided additional practice for design thinking and design research strategies

Impact on research:

Invaluable secondary research gathered through provided links and videos. Assignments allowed me to demonstrate and practice writing surveys and questionnaires before conducting them for my own thesis research.

As with the User Empathy workshop, learning additional models and research tactics was beneficial to the research summary and data analysis portion of my thesis.
Appendix C
Survey Analysis
FAMILY HISTORY AND PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION SURVEY

1. **Age**  What is your age?

   ![Age Distribution](image)

   NOTE: Average age of survey participant is consistent with the audience and user group that regularly participates in family history research and documentation. Both age ranges of 26 and 74 were the youngest and oldest participants.

2. **Gender**  What is your gender?

   ![Gender Distribution](image)

   NOTE: The majority gender of survey participant is consistent with the gender of individual most likely doing family history research according to secondary research and observations.

3. **Employment Status**  What is your employment status?

   ![Employment Status Distribution](image)

   NOTE: Question was asked to gain insight on if individual was busy with a job or if the majority of participants had more leisure time to pursue family history and self documentation.

4. **Location one lives**  Which of the following best describes the area you live in?

   ![Location Distribution](image)

   NOTE: Question was asked to gain insight location of participants, keeping in mind in further questions regarding access and travel if and when they search for vital records.
Participation in family history research

What is your level of participation in family history research?

- I don’t do family history research at all: 6%
- I have an interest in family history research, but do not do it: 17%
- I occasionally do family history research: 26%
- I am actively doing family history research: 41%
- I have previously done some family history research: 15%

Reasons for doing research

What are some reasons for doing family history research? Check all that apply.

- Finding famous ancestors: 19%
- Religious interest: 4%
- Understanding family medical history: 25%
- I am retired and have more time to devote to research: 8%
- Death of a loved one: 23%
- Preserve memories of a deceased relative: 40%
- Discover stories behind family heirlooms: 38%
- Understanding family connections to historical events: 57%
- Picked up where other family members left off in research: 26%
- Feel a duty to document for future generations: 60%
- Strong interest in history: 58%
- It is more of a hobby, a fun thing to do: 38%
- Other: 15%

Other:
- Understanding the culture in which these families survived
- Asked to participate
- Requested by my mother
- Documenting architectural projects and the history of the person creating them for an academic institution
- Don’t want history to be rewritten. Want 1st person accounts.
- To leave information for my future grandchildren
- Strong interest in family history
- It’s my hobby

Level of interest

How interested are you in your family heritage?

- Somewhat curious: 35%
- Interested: 24%
- Very interested: 61%
- Not interested at all: 0%
FAMILY HISTORY AND PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION SURVEY

**Frequency**  How often do you do family history research?

- Never 13%
- Daily 7%
- Less than Once a Month 28%
- Once a month 11%
- 2–3 Times a Month 17%
- Once a Week 11%
- 2–3 Times a Week 13%
- I don’t document my research findings 9%

**Location of research**  Where do you keep most your research information?

- On my personal computer 40%
- On paper 30%
- Online 8%
- Other 13%
- I don’t document my research findings 9%

**Documenting research**  How do you document your research? Check all that apply.

- Use my smart phone (6) 12%
- Use my iPad or tablet (3) 6%
- Write information by hand in notebook or loose pages (26) 55%
- I use a digital camera to take images (26) 51%
- Keep notes online (18) 35%
- Make copies and keep in physical files (36) 71%
- Type notes and store on the computer (18) 35%

**Where documenting takes place**  Where do you go to do your research? Check all that apply.

- Work from home (44) 85%
- In public libraries (29) 56%
- Genealogical or historical societies (24) 46%
- Family history centers (20) 19%
- Travel to sites where original records are kept (25) 48%

NOTE: Working from home is on the rise with more and more records being digitized and more genealogy related material becoming available to the general public. The rate of materials becoming digitized according to interviews, secondary research, and observations, is still very far behind but is slow and steady in its progress, making it still necessary to visit other institutions holding analog records.

OTHER:
- Some online, some in paper in a large overstuffed briefcase
- paper and computer
- My husband does research and keeps information on his computer, on paper, and also shares with sites on-line
- I would say about half on paper and half on pc
- at the university
- Online server and my PC and on 8 DVD copies with my family

NOTE: Almost even splits between record keeping and use of analog and digital forms is consistent with secondary research and observations. This has led to problems with multi-media formats and frustration of what to do with all the materials.
FAMILY HISTORY AND PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION SURVEY

- **Research methods**  Which best describes your research methods?

  - I work on my research alone 58%
  - I collaborate with others but at a distance 15%
  - I work on research with other family members 21%
  - I have others do the research for me 6%

  **NOTE:** The majority of participants working alone is consistent with secondary research and observations.

- **When Research is conducted**  When do you usually do your research?

  - Weekends 30%
  - During the day 25%
  - Evenings 25%
  - Weekdays 8%
  - At family gatherings 13%

  **NOTE:** No real conclusive data here. It seems that day, night, or weekends is almost even. Assumptions have been made through observations that individuals if in fact participating are fitting in when and where they can.

- **Wish you knew**  What are things that you wish you knew about your ancestors?

  - I want to know what type or person they were.
  - I’d like to know what their life was like.
  - The why questions-I know they moved frequently, but why? Did the business fail? Were they looking for broader horizons?
  - Why they moved to certain locations, what their personalities were like, did they care about family history
  - Their stories of how they came to be who they are.
  - health histories, what life was like for them
  - Dates, locations, occupations, anecdotes
  - Countries of origin, interesting stories
  - country of origin
  - Medical history, education, skills, trade, divorce, mental illness/personality disorders, miscarriages (family secret kind of stuff)
  - Which maternal grandparent was Serbian, which was Croation?
  - From which region in Ireland was my paternal grandmother’s family? A great-great grandmother (paternal) returned to Ireland to die. Why?
  - More about their childhood
  - medical history
  - How did they get to the US
  - Who they are and where they came from
  - Dates and locations of their photos; one generation American - wish researching other languages was easier.
  - Wish I knew their stories -- more personal letters and journals.
  - I want to know more about where they lived, when they came to the U.S., occupations.
• more about what happened to my grandparents’ parents who lived in Greece.
• Names and dates (birth, death etc.)
• Personal stories, work history and any concerns they dealt with on a daily basis.
• More about who they were, their circumstances, and the social and historical contexts in which they lived.
• places they lived, jobs they had,
• what happened during their lifetimes
• how they came to the USA
• Why they moved to Gallia co Ohio. Really, I wonder what brought them there. Was it an advertisement In a newspaper? a letter a neighbor received from their family member who had already moved there?! Also I’d like to know their stories ...not just their vital records. I crave knowing things about them like tricks their siblings played on them, who was their favorite aunt and why, their first memory and the like so that’s the kind of info I am trying to capture fr my grandparents now. It’s hard for lists of names and dates to come to life but it has more appeal for me n others to have personal stories to accompany the facts. I also wish I knew exactly where they lived so I could walk the land and picture them there if the area is still rural. I only have this info for some of my lines
• How they got to the United States and why they chose to come
• were they came from, where they lived.
• I wish I knew why they immigrated to the U. S., why they chose a particular location to settle in, and why they decided to move to other locations within the U.S. I also wish I knew more about their daily lives, how they participated in their local economy and culture, how they viewed life. I wish I knew lots of things!
• My mother told a story about Frank L. Wright’s work on a great uncle’s house that I cannot confirm (and many sources make no mention). I would love to know where she heard it from to give me a direction.
• Who they were and where they came from.
• Why they left Europe to come to America. Once they came to America how did they decide where to live?
• Timeline
• as this is a professional activity for me, ancestors do not apply
• our names before Ellis Island changed them. Why they came. Where they came from. Why the settled in the KY mountains.
• who was related to who and how close did they stay in touch
• How they responded to the times they lived in, what type of work did they do to survive, what was their attitude towards social injustices, racism, family; were they land owners, political?
• What nationality they were, where they come from, What happened to some of them that I can’t find
• Why they immigrated from Europe
• Key events in their lives and how they intersected with history. Forrest Gump / serendipity
• Why Gr. Grandma was so mean.
• Personality and physical features
• My grandfather came from Italy when he was 17 and they changed his name at Ellis Island. I cannot find him under his given name on any ship manifest and since he never talked about his journey, they was speculation he was fleeing from the law or something. I would like to find him on a manifest and dispel the rumors. On my Polish side, I would like to find the towns they were from and find out why they came to America
• Nationality
• how married couples met, political views, motivations,
• Why they came to the USA
• country of origin in Europe

NOTE: Answers and desires are consistent with the disconnect of information that government documents and vital records do not provide and what individuals are actually seeking. Arguments can continually be made that it is up to individuals as well as families to be proactive in documenting their everyday lives so that future generations do not have to suffer as well.
Is there information that is hard to find out about your ancestors?

- Personal information is difficult to find. Most information is from statistical forms or personal records.
- The kinds of things I mentioned above. Facts are easy—motives are hard.
- Native American connections, personality traits
- Some records are lost because of bombing and burning during WWI and II.
- children
  - I haven’t tried yet, but others in my family have tracked down a pretty good chunk of our genealogy.
  - Much of it, but I haven’t devoted much time to it.
- most of the above
- Language barriers at the present time.
- actual arrival dates to US
- yes
- Yes after the 1800’s
- YES
- Yes -- in other countries. Wish more public records were online and more universal/standard. i.e. property, immigration, birth and death records. More “how to” find information.
- Having trouble tracing some ancestors on the maternal side.
- Since they lived in Greece, it’s hard to track down.
- Yes. Especially stuff about family coming from other countries in the 1800s.
- All of the above mentioned items.
- We have a lot of information about some, and next to nothing about others. I am interested in where my fathers ancestors came from, and when and where my mother’s ancestors arrived here.
- anything before 1900
- yes, we know there is lost documentation
- really do not know where to start
- Location info I described about where they lived (see previous response) n names of parents for people before 1850 census where names aren’t listed (my family members rarely had wills). It’s also hard to find marriage records for Pennsylvania since they didn’t keep track until early 1900s.
- Where they immigrated from
- How they got to the United States
- when it come to finding when they came from other countries.
- Yes, a great deal. In particular there are vital records I would love to have but, they’ve either been lost, are so buried they can’t be found, or they never existed in the first place.
- Documentation from ancestors life in Europe is more difficult to obtain
- Yes. Most of my relatives do not speak to each other anymore and they do not like to discuss the history of our family.
- Yes.
- Sure

- N/A
- all of it. There are not many formal records for KY mountain dwellers
- where they are buried
- Other than a census report, how they got the family name, who if anyone was involved in how they got to where they lived, were they ever enslaved
- YES
- Finding exact location of grandfather’s burial site.
- When the died, where they are really buried. And most of all, when women remarried, they “disappear”.
- Great Grandma’s birth record because of the fires in the south of the courthouses
- physical features
- Yes, the ship manifest from Italy in 1910 - but that is because I cannot find him by his given name.
- Anyone from Germany is difficult because of the amount records destroyed during the World Wars
- personal stories of long dead ancestors only what is recorded in papers is what is available no family diaries
- yes, the information just ends, very frustrating.
- information from 1700-1800
- harder to find female ancestors
- country of origin/percentage
• what ship they came to the US and where they landed, Death, burial records
• Farmers and miners didn’t keep many records and weren’t written about

NOTE: Some of the questions can be answered through public records but a majority, are the deeper, personal narratives that individuals are craving. By annotating these stories and photos, we can alleviate a lot of these issues of the unknown that is not being answered through public and vital records for future generations.

**Time travel** If you could go back in time to an historical event or time period, when or where would it be? Please explain.

• Too difficult to narrow down to a single event or time period. I’d like to see any part of history from my birth all the way back to before recorded events.
• My research is on the 1918 flu, so I would like to go back to that!
• It would be hard to pick but it would either be late 18th century America, probably Boston or Philadelphia or 19th century and witness first hand what my hometown was like during the Civil War.
• Spera, Italy where my father’s family all originated
• surgical operation in 1750 -- I am a medical historian by profession
• I would enjoy experiencing the beginnings of the punk and rap undergrounds in the mid-1970s.
• No idea. Medieval Spain maybe? I’ve studied it a lot. I’d like to see many eras.
• early 1900s; it was a time of great transition into a more modern lifestyle. I would like to see how it was happening.
• When ancestors came to U.S.
• Probably 1890’s period dress, culture and mores.
• 30s-40s I could understand what it was like when my parents grew up
• ?
• When they came to the US and why
• 1800’S.....I HAVE AN AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE.....I AM CURIOUS ABOUT THE LINEAGE
• Hmm -- GREAT question! Maybe the Depression Era to find out how people got through it, coped, and persevered. It seems like we could certainly learn some GREAT lessons from people then as we are going through it now. I also loved the sense of "goodliness" and kindness about people then and up through the 50s. There was a much better sense of self-respect and love for each other. A gentler, more loving time perhaps.
• Not sure I want to go back.
• no particular event
• Early 1900s to experience baseball. But that’s not family based. Family based would be Ireland in the 1800s to see family from then before they came to the US.
• All events prior to the 1900s, because there is so little info given.
• 1950’s golden age of america. family and church was very important.
• during the 1600’s to see how it related to both my european and american families
• when my ancestors came to the USA
• 1880s because the trauma of the Civil War was over and the relatives were still loving who could help me with some if the dead ends I have now (ie the names of their patents/grandparents). Also a farmhouse that is still in the family would have been in it’s prime.
• Colonial America
• I would love to go back to when my great grandparents on my mom's side lived. They had a fire that destroyed all their children and the father in law. I would love to meet those children.

• Victoria era in England. Always like the style in that time.

• It’s hard to narrow it down to one, I have an interest in so many, but realistically it would have to be the 1920s-30s. I am fascinated by the culture of this era, and at least there would be some of societal advances (plumbing, electric, medical) that I wouldn’t want to live without.

• The early 20th century around the time of WW I intrigues me. It was an era of great change.

• My maternal grandfather’s ancestors landed in New Hampshire/Maine area in 1650s, my paternal grandfather’s ancestor was on the Mayflower and my paternal grandmother’s ancestor came in 1686 with a British land grant; take your pick!

• I would like to go back to the day that the first one of my ancestors came to America and know who they were and where they were from.

• Hard to chose but I think I would go back to Virginia in the early 1800s. Many of my ancestors came to that region at about that time.

• 1917-20 The Great War years; Camp Sherman, Ohio & Italy; father was in US Army

• 1960’s - this is the period we are covering in our research. It would be great to attend an architect/client meeting, visit the office, and see how people lived in modernist houses that were largely open space designs.

• The very early 1900’s. I love the clothes and the excitement going on at the time. I would have loved to live in NY and watched how things changed with the arrival of immigrants.

• Early 1900’s in Akron, Ohio. So many of family were still living and how I wish I could meet them.

• Before slavery or the beginning of the civil rights movement

• I would go back and meet my great-great grandfathers that served in the civil war, probably about 1877-1880. I would also like to find out where my great-grandfather was born and why they moved from Virginia to Missouri

• Early 20th century, southwestern Scotland. To see why my ancestors left for America.

• I’m researching one particular ancestor and am writing a book about her life. Of all my ancestors I find her story most unusual. She “disappeared” in 1917. My grandfather’s journals tell of celebrating Thanksgiving with her in Warren Twp, Tuscarawas Co., OH. At age 64, married 8 times, with a notorious reputation as an Ohio madam, how lost can my grandma really be?

• Most of the things I think I would like to know more about (Dr. King, JFK) would just make me sad so no, not really

• 1809 when my family travelled from Connecticut to Stow/Cuyahoga Falls, where I now reside.

• It is not historical, but I would like to go back to High School when I first did a family tree. I would like to talk to my relatives about their experiences growing up. So many have passed away and some of my relatives don’t have any interest in what I am doing.

NOTE: Question was asked for fun—a break question from the very serious ones in hopes of inspiring and motivating the participants to finish the survey. The second reason was to examine if participants were hoping to go back to a time that was ancestry or relative related. Surprisingly, most of the answers and motivations were, perpetuating this idea of longing or regret from the unknown.
At what age did have an interest in family history?

- In my early 40's
- early-maybe 6 or 7
- around 12
- 12
- 6
- 15 or 50
- early teens
- teens
- When my mom died (I was 14 years old)
- teenage years
- mid 30's
- 50
- 15
- 25
- Very early on -- as a pre-teen. Began with a love of photographs
- Since I was a child
- 40
- Probably 30-32
- When I was six years old, my father passed away and I never got to meet his family. We lived in Ohio and they lived in Texas.
- about 30ish
- the older I get...so maybe it started 10 or so years ago
- 55
- 8
- 10
- 17
- 10
- 13 - I remember it vividly because I did a family history project in school. I have been interested in history as a whole as long as I can remember
- teenage
- Really started in 1993 (age of 51) when my mother-in-law asked for assistance in updating her genealogy (a self-published book). After that my mother asked me to update her family's genealogy from a 1925 descendancy chart
- 16
- early twenties
- 69
- N/A
- 12
- I was young when I asked where my Great-Grandfather was buried, no one knew. I thought that was very sad.
- 10
- mid 20s
- Fourteen
- 12
- teenager
- 17, but never acted on it.
- 46, just recently.
- early in youth My grandfather would tell me stories of his youth in early Akron he was born in 1899
- 34 ish, I started digging around asking my mom about information
- 10
- 19
- 40ish
- 47
- 54

NOTE: Over 50% of participants responded that their interest started at a very young age to teenage years. It wasn’t until much older in life that they acted or participated in this interest. A nother question gathering insight on to why they became interested or why they did not act on this interest until later in life would have been extremely helpful.
**Age of participation**  At what age did you actively begin participating in family history research?

- Around 48
- about 10
- 18
- 12
- 6
- haven’t done yet
- early teens, again, very rarely
- 30s
- 14 years old
- round 40 years of age
- adult
- late 30’s
- 50
- 35
- 25
- As a teen. Had many living relatives. Loved their stories
- 5 years ago
- about 40
- Probably 36
- I was about 42 years of age
- In my 30’s we received some family information from a cousin that started an interest. My Dad also had some interesting stories that We begin to research after his death. (I was in my 50’s then)
- same
- the last few years
- 55
- 9 when I took a 4H project to the county fair
- 37
- 23
- 25 maybe younger
- 13, but then left it alone for many years after that. Started again about age 30
- @20 years old
- Age of 55; see above
- 39
- Mid fifties
- personal family...never really active
- N/A
- 12 (minimal participation)
- Age 52
- Age 27
- 20
- early 40s
- mid-twenties
- 12
- 16
- 47
- 46
- in my 20’s
- 40, my mother losing her memory due to Dementia..
- 16
- 20
- 40ish
- unsure

NOTE: Majority of participants started to actively participate between their 30s to 50s. This question provided insufficient data as to why this was only occurring. Without further investigation, only assumptions could be made at this time.
**FAMILY HISTORY AND PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION SURVEY**

**Level of concern**  
Are you concerned about leaving information for future generations to find out about you or your family?

- Already documenting experiences for the future: 26%
- Somewhat concerned: 23%
- Very concerned: 21%
- Not concerned: 23%
- Never thought about it before: 8%

**Level of Interest in self documentation**  
What is your level of interest in self documentation for the future?

- Very interested: 33%
- Somewhat interested: 37%
- Interested but don’t know where or how to start: 25%
- Not interested: 4%

**Currently participate in documentation**  
Do you currently participate in documenting your life experiences?

- Yes, I keep a journal or a notebook: 35%
- Yes, I use social media for this: 10%
- Yes, I write on an online blog: 2%
- No, I don’t find it important: 2%
- No, I don’t document my life experiences: 51%
72 Things you are documenting

Check all that apply.

- Daily activities and experiences
- Whatever I find interesting at the time
- Life milestones
- Topic specific
- Family members
- Other

**OTHER:**
- Military Experience
- Summary of each year in Christmas letter
- Travel
- Any discovered family history
- Photographs only at this point
- Never done this, maybe need to.

73 Social Media

What is your level of expertise with social media?

- I often use social media 45%
- I rarely use social media 28%
- I don't use social media 15%
- I am addicted to social media 11%

74 Methods of capture

What methods do you use to capture a memory or experience?

Check all that apply.

- Record experience through recording device
- Write about experience in a physical journal or notebook
- Write about experience on a blog
- Shoot video
- Take photos
- Share experience through an online social media site
- I don’t capture memories or experiences
- Other

**OTHER:**
- Save others’ documentation
- Make scrapbooks of travel to distant relatives
- Write a “journal” and keep on my computer
- I use genealogy related software
- Some notes in e-mails
- Ancestry.com
- Digital files

NOTE: The fact that the majority of participants are documenting family members is reassuring for the prototype being designed. Interesting topics as well as life milestones are key since these areas are what family historians are searching for with their ancestors.

NOTE: Taking photos to capture memories is consistent with the easiest and most popular way that individuals are participating in documenting their daily lives and experiences through visual storytelling.
FAMILY HISTORY AND PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION SURVEY

Future generations  What do you feel are important things that future generations should know about?

• Day-to-day existence, feelings and emotions. Things that cannot be captured on a government form. Tell them about me and my life.

• I’m not sure on this-surely they won’t be interested in my 3rd grade drawings, but who knows? I wasn’t aware that my grandmother was an artist until I found her drawings.

• My personal feelings about what is happening in the world, country and city. My recollections of what relatives are like. My work experience and why I pursued certain careers and jobs.

• Changes in social mores, ways of dealing with tragedies, health issues, political events affecting life changes, how personalities emerge and affect others.

• health history, hopes dreams, travels

• Daily life, mindsets, understandings of the world.

• What people were thinking at this time. Why they made the decisions they made?

• Inner feelings, internal conflicts, dreams (realized and unfulfilled), perceptual things

• The reasons their ancestors came to America; How they help to physically “build” this country. Do not take the freedoms that we have for granted. How they can perhaps make things better in America.

• It is good to share success stories or stories of over coming difficult situations and love stories and funny stories

• medical history, accomplishments

• Who are your ancestors and what did they do for a living. What kind of health problems did they have.

• SOCIAL SETTINGS OF THE ERA

• About being more kind and loving. About cherishing respect for each other. I worry about how hateful people are and how they seem to care very little for one another. Times are tough. But people need to be more kind. There is a lot that can be learned about this in previous generations. They accomplished much by sticking together.

• medical history for one, but sometimes just knowing what professions people had or ways of life are interesting and fun to know

• Life as it is now.

• Family: accomplishments, goals, dreams, job history, and any others concerns we would like to share with our relatives.

• Names, dates, relationships, the things that will make ancestors real and give future generations a sense of their place in a living history.

• how and by who this nation was started, and how this was for the most part a christian nation. this is being lost and or lied about today

• what made each of our families unique and different

• now that I am older and have lost both parents I see the reason to document the lives of the ones that we have lost

• where you came from.

• I think they should know our thoughts and feelings about our society - what’s important to us and why, and why we did things a certain way.

• How they fit into the family; how and why certain situations occurred in the manner in which they did

• How hard life was for many generations of our and other families

• Where we came from and who we were.

• How people lived day to day. What major factors influenced their life decisions. Where people lived.

• major events...cause and affect...facts more than personal opinion...personal insight OK

• how design decisions affect people’s lives and vice versa

• Where family is buried and visit these gravesites.

• The kind of people they descend from, what they did to survive in the times they lived, what challenges they faced and how did they die, at what age

• how we lived, the influence of our family on our lives, my mother gets to interact with her great-grandchildren while both of my grandmothers died before I was born

• obituaries and the path to lead them to other important family documents

• How historical events are perceived by the participants and in the context of that event. I’m looking for immediacy.
FAMILY HISTORY AND PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION SURVEY

- Medical history. Why somethings changed because a head of family died.
- Milestones and everyday lifestyle
- They should know about their ancestors and where they came from; what diseases the family members had since genetic components of diseases is becoming more important.
- How important family relationships are and your makeup due to this connections.
- Be careful of the leaders they chose the world does not need anymore Hitlers
- You should know where you come from and know your roots..we all came from diverse backgrounds, I just want to know more..
- their roots
- Social concerns
- the depth and breath of family experience
- health, background
- I have no idea. I am a generalist. I will record as much family and Streetsboro history on the new "M" disc as I can.

NOTE: Views and desires are consistent with what individuals are longing for that government documents do not provide. One particular comment talks about searching for events documented as soon as they happen, an argument that supports documenting and event or experience as soon as it happens.
Appendix D
Interview Analysis
Focus: archiving today and contact leads

I had met Interviewee 1 over the summer at the Genealogy, Local and Public History workshop. The purpose of this interview was to gather advice from Interviewee 1 about her contacts and who she thought would be great to interview. I learned a great deal from her workshop that I took, and felt it unnecessary to conduct a full interview with her.

excerpts from interview:

Interviewee 1 provided me with over 20 names and locations of people and places that would be useful for my research, and also might take my survey. We talked at length about struggles archivists have today regarding local and city collections. Many questions these individuals have are simply what to keep and what not to throw out. It is incredibly hard to determine what will be rich in information and value into the future.

Collecting for archives is a passive thing Interviewee 1 explains. Archivists are usually collecting things from someone at the end of their life or career. She is concerned greatly about the issues that archivists are teaching students about preservation today.

When asked about capturing the present, Interviewee 1 advises me to look at this issue with a journalistic perspective. What do journalists think and how are they looking into the future?

“There is a FINE LINE between contemporary history/current affairs. What is the difference? No perspective. History is derived from perspective, we have something to reference from. Journalism reports on today. Historians report on the past.”

Interviewee 1 concluded that there is a big difference between records management and archiving. Archivists want the 5% that is being looked at. The records that hold historical significance. This is a common misconception, that archivists are the gatekeepers to any and all information.
Focus: unexpected interview opportunity

Interviewee 1 introduced me to her colleague who shared her office. Interviewee 2 agreed to talk with me about my proposal and offer some advice.

excerpts from interview:

Interviewee 2 specializes in modern records and teaches seminars about how to preserve them. He is constantly trying to determine why people preoccupy themselves with their own personal records. He has concluded that they believe that they broke barriers. He wants to understand why some people document themselves and why some people do not.

Interviewee 2 advised me to take a look at scrapbooking and the history of leisure activities. It was in 1976 Interviewee 2 explains when the tv mini series Roots was aired, that people with diverse backgrounds started to do genealogy. Now we aren’t so preoccupied with documenting our lives, and he, (like myself) are striving to find out why.

How we leave records? Why do some leave better records than others? How do we discover the records that we need? One’s that are saved—how do we pass them onto our families? These are all questions that Interviewee 2 challenges his students with his seminars and various courses.

“What are worthy of our time and institutional resources? (from an archivist perspective). One’s that broke barriers.”

“Archivist can be there to create avenues, be an advocate for your records if they have value. Most stories and people are absolute crap. In one person’s life, there are many stories to tell.”

Interviewee 2 is a firm believer in quality vs. quantity. He also believes that the strength of a story goes well beyond genealogy. Narrative histories are critical, both written and electronic.

Archivists participate in the art of weeding-selection and appraisal. How do we push up collections to their true record value? Archivists are critical to do this.
Focus: concerns as a librarian and a potential prototype user

Interviewee 3 was the only person out of 59 survey takers to leave a response on my site page. I immediately jumped at this opportunity to find out about her background and understand her position in the Special Collections at a local public library. This focus was to understand what the public was searching for, her own personal family history research experiences, and to gain user insight into my prototype development.

excerpts from interview:

I asked Interviewee 3 about that status of vital records today.

“I think there are a lot of records and a lot of information out there that is just so buried. That people don’t even know where to begin to look. I think there is a great deal in archives and in libraries that is not accessible because it has not been catalogued or not been put in a database or has not been digitized.”

“There is a huge amount of genealogical information that is in private hands that has been passed down through the families that we are just now beginning to find ways to make that available through the internet.”

We discussed at length the issues of the legitimacy and authenticity of public records, especially ones that are not driven by the government and are created by the public.

“If you compare the print world to the digital world, in genealogy there has always been a question about the secondary sources, and how good they are. That has always been a concern, you know you find published genealogies that were done years ago, absolutely no sources. How do you know where the information is coming from? At that point a lot of that was interviewing family members, people would just communicate amongst themselves, and give each other this information. But no sources would be attached but that’s just how it was done. Today there is a lot more emphasize on the importance of the sources. I still think online you have this tendency toward not citing sources on submitted works. I’m just now starting to see some online sharing tools that are emphasizing the importance of the resources and citing where you got the information so again we are JUST starting to get into this and it’s really interesting to see.”

Interviewee 3
Expertise:
Genealogy
History
Library Special Collections
Writing
Interview: in person
11–16–11
Impact on research:
Confirmed my assumptions of concerns of self documentation and issues of privacy. Also gave insight at what librarians face, especially in Special Collecting.
Privacy is a huge concern that I am focusing on in regards to my prototype. Interviewee 3 shares her concerns as well.

“I am so focused on finding the past that I honestly haven’t-it is like I am so focused on finding the past and putting it out there for the future, but I haven’t done as much with the present and I think part of it goes back to what you were saying about information on individuals who have died versus living individuals. There is a huge privacy concern. And I would never post or submit any information on living individuals which means there is a huge gap there between the generations that have gone before us and us and those connections are harder to make. They can only be made by current, present communication amongst the descendants and that’s you know that’s the only way it really can be done.”

I have been met with a lot of concern and feelings of being overwhelmed when asking interviewees about self documentation. This also occurred in the survey I conducted, and seems to be a touchy issue.

“I am so busy with, I’m so concerned with the documents that I have and getting them out there that I am not necessarily documenting my own life. Your online survey really drove that point home. I’m just not sure what I can do at this point. With remaining a private person, and I am a very private person. You know I don’t want to put my whole life out there. I’m not even on Facebook.”

“I don’t have kids and that is probably a big thing for me when it comes to who am I going to leave this to. There is no one immediately that I can say you know, here’s my life- do what you want with me! I have thought of ways to donate my family history to various repositories and things like that. I’m already thinking in those terms. But again, how am I going to document myself? This is a question that you brought up that I am going to have to think about. “

“My own biography, my own viewpoints. You have really brought up an interesting point! Is it something that IS important to me to leave behind.”

“It is funny, as genealogists we always talk about your obituary as often being the only biographical information that has been published about you. In some people’s cases that is absolutely true.
Is that what I want for me? I don't know. I think I want a little bit more. I just don't know exactly how to go about doing it.”

I asked Interviewee 3 about her thoughts on the immediacy of self documentation, and if she thinks the sooner the better, or maybe we should reflect on the experience before acting on it.

“From what I know about the documented past, the best sources are the ones that were written at the time something was happening. So to say I need time to evaluate this, well that is never going to happen.”

Regarding the Library of Congress archiving twitter posts: “I think there is value to that. From an archival standpoint, you can’t save everything, something is going to get lost. I think the challenge is finding those representative snippets that future people will be able to look back on and get a daily accurate snapshot out of what things were like.”

I finally concluded with asking if she had any thoughts to share about the library patrons who visit the Special Collections and issues they might face.

“How much of this do I want to post to the world? I would rather… if I am going to do something like this I would keep it to myself until I’m gone. Whoever I decide to leave this to say here it is. I am still very wary of expressing too much of myself to too many people at once.”

“I do hear now and then that people are looking for the more personal details, why people did things the way they did. And that’s just the kind of stuff that you really either have to study the social history of the time period to get a general sense of it and kind of extrapolate that to your own ancestor, or you know the only other way is if your ancestor recorded it!”
Interviewee 4 was one of the contacts given to me by Interviewee 1. I had him previously on my short list of potential experts and decided since his name was continually brought up to investigate.

**excerpts from interview:**

Interviewee 4 studies extensively about the subject of oral history. Having participated in the Oral History Institute at Kenyon College, it was crucial to gather another historian's perspective. The notion of storytelling was brought up again and how important that is to our society.

“What oral history teaches you is the ability to think. To not talk. And it is difficult in our society because usually a conversation involves back and forth, but oral history requires you to listen while someone talks.”

“All of someone’s social qualifications that identify a segment of the population make individual stories exemplary of a particular situation. In that way social history and oral history play a very significant role in social or cultural history. There is such a need for a combination of these two things”

“In an oral history you want it to be relevant to now. What can I learn from this interview from the past. Oral history is much more contemporaneous than is often times traditional history which tends to focus on the past without much connection to the present. But I think most oral history has to in some way speak to the present moment otherwise there is no reason to interview people. So there has to be a personal investment in it.”

Interviewee 4 described a fascinating concept that he has written and published articles and books about. The idea of “intentionality” and how this can influence oral histories and the types of things researchers need to be aware of.

“Looking at the past using documents I’m just looking, trying to reconstruct a past, because it is an interesting time period. But when I interview you I have to come up with a set of questions. And those set of questions reflects something called intentionality. Intentionality is of course when I contact you to interview you, we both then enter the interview process with our intentions. There is something you want, as the person I’m interviewing. You want to hear your life validated. You want to tell interesting stories
that are instructive to me. Right? You want to feel important. You want to be recognized as someone who is significant, your life had meaning and someone wants to talk to you about it. And from my vantage point as the interviewee, as a historian, I want certain questions like what it was like in your childhood. Where did you go to school. How did being a woman affect your ability to get into university or get a job. How did your husband treat you, what were some of the roles assigned. So we both go into this interview with intentions. Right? So what we do in the interview process is in the result of give and take question and answer is we have to find these what I call these lines of intersection. Where your intentions and my intentions meet. And that's why in an interview the interviewer is constantly asking questions and directing where the interview is going without interrupting.”

“The interviewer is coming in with a specific set of goals whether they are stated or not. And I’m approaching it a specific set of goals as well. There are things I want you to know about oral history. There are things you want to know about oral history. At these lines of intersection, that is where the communication begins. That's where it starts and that's where it begins to flower. And this intentionality and intersectionality that occur, that's where the more relevant personal relationship between the interviewer and interviewee takes place. So you are in effect journaling your own experience by the questions you are creating, because it reflects back on you. The referentiality is back on you as opposed to me. So it is not you are the interviewer and I’m the interviewee. It is not subject object, but rather two subjects. Right? Trying to find some way of communicating or understanding. Because of course I want what I’m saying to be significant for you, I’m not trying to waste my time or your time. And you want what I am saying to be significant, but only for your project. And so we find that common ground between two poles and that intersectionality. And that is how oral history works. And that is how it's about the person being interviewed. So you could still interview your grandmother, and talk about the 1950s, when she was a kid or young woman. And it doesn't sound like it is about you. But every question you ask, in a way is about you. Right? And as someone who comments after the interview, we you listen back to the interview and hear grandma talk about being woman. Your response to her responses is going to reflect the time and place you are in now. Right? These are the type of things that no matter what in an oral history your interviewing, you're always bringing up to present date. Because otherwise you wouldn't be asking the questions you are asking now”
Social media is a contemporary topic that I am investigating; studying the immediacy of it and its significance and potential value for social historians in the future.

“The benefit of oral history compared to social media and downloading someone’s social media is the difference between time and space. When you’re tweeting, that is not necessarily instructive now. Ten years from now, looking back we’ll look back at those records and say “wow, look at how busy so and so was, look at all the things she did, look at all the people who followed her, look at the conversations that they wrote back and forth. But the immediacy of it—time and space—doesn’t have much value time and space now. But as a collectible, archival thing, it is like collecting letters. Letters when people write them do not have much value in that immediate moment—time and space. Time and space later on, ten years, you are looking at what was adolescent life like in the early part of the 21st century, we have all these letters from so and so that she wrote to her sister when who was away at college. Emails, text messages, or tweets. Then it becomes an important resource.”

We also discussed at length the difference between oral and written, and why multiple forms of communication or important to get the whole picture.

“You take that resource which is written, and the difference between a written and an oral resource is written is contemplative. You think before you write. Do I really want to say that? No, I’m not going to hit the send button just yet, I’m going to wait. Where as in a conversation, if an oral history is done properly, you lead the respondent to the questions you want them to address. And as a result in becomes a conversation and in conversation you often get information that might not be sent in an email, probably would be sent in some form of personal letter. You are not going to get much depth in social media. In an interview you are going to get a lot of depth. Oral history allows for the elaboration of the ideas whereas social media you are stuck with what you got.”

Interviewee 4 does not share my view on the idea of capturing an experience immediately after it happens. I found this curious and intriguing but understandable from an individual with a background in history.

“I don’t believe oral history works best in the immediate moment. In the immediate moment you are too focused on the immediacy, time and space. To focused on this moment.”
“Memory is a social relationship. The construction of memory is based upon this social relationship. So if I am in the middle of something in the middle of a strike, in the middle of Occupy Wall Street for example, my responses are going to be the immediate response I get from the stimuli of those people around me. But six weeks later I go home, I tell the story of Occupy Wall Street and people say that sounds like bullshit. The more the story is told the more it is validated or invalidated as a social experience.”

At this time I was introduced to the idea of collective memory, and how memory shifts over time because of a variety of factors. Interviewee 4 mentioned a pioneer of memory studies, Maurice Halbwachs and explained,

“Memory is a social function. We have individual memories but they are validated in our peer group, within our social group. The more they are validated in that peer group the more they become our memories.”

“Memory shifts over time. “It would be an interesting longitudinal study to interview them immediately, then wait five years and interview them again, 10, years, 20 years, same database of questions. Oral history is the construction of memory. That is some of the limitations of oral history. You aren’t always going to get the truth— with a capital T. But you will get the truth with the small t which is that socially constructed identity truth. Where oral history is interesting, not as a tool to document linear experience, but rather document this question of memory. And how memories or formed, and how memories become historical narrative.”

We concluded our discussion about the phenomenon of individuals getting wrapped up in historical moments and believing they were really there. This concerned me creating, reflection on my concerns for authenticity and legitimacy of various memories and narratives.

“People will whether they are consciously doing it, it’s not a lie, but they are placing themselves into thee event because the event meant so much that they had to place themselves into it. What does this tell us? It tells us that that experience was a larger historical experience not only in that time period, but it becomes a larger historical experience in the future. 20 years later something is much more significant than it was then. Because it marked a transition. So people looking back said, I want to be part of
that transition, I wanna grow too… I wasn't there in 1963, I'm there now in 1985” That is how events in oral history become social, become part of this historical record because people place themselves back in historical moments even if they weren't there but it reflects the significance of those historical moments in our memory and our understanding as a society because memory is a social function."

“Cultural markers give meaning to our memories.”
Focus: issues at a larger archival institution

Interviewee 5 was the contact that I made at the Ohio Genealogical Conference in Columbus, Ohio. We agreed that at a good point in my research that we should meet up for an interview so I can gain insight into the work of a larger, state wide institution to compare to my local library and state university experiences.

excerpts from interview:

I wanted to investigate what the Ohio Historical Society found worthy of collecting and how did their collections come to be.

“We get a lot of donations or letters, diaries, journals. So from our manuscript side, those things are very important to us because it tells you sort of the day to day activities of lives of what people were doing. What that is going to be like in the future? I think there is still a big discussion of how the electronic influence is going to change how people are communicating with each other and how easy that is for our guys to collect and keep. To some degree you think it might be easier because people are making these nice little databases but how are those going to end up getting to an archives that is actually going to store them for a public collection like we do with diaries and journals with things that are donated, or sometimes we pick them up at auction. Most of it is donated”

“We have some scrapbooks although we are not heavy in scrapbooks. There are some archives that I know are really are getting into the idea of collecting people’s scrapbooks because scrapbooking has been so big in the last decade. So that is how a lot of people are documenting their family lives. And it’s not just about photos anymore. It’s about including little movie ticket stubs and things like that. Those types of things are sort of like the social ephemera that often gets thrown out. So we like to see some of those things. It is sort of a hindsight type thing. We don’t tend to like to collect in the present. Things become more value when there is a little bit of distance.”

Interviewee 5 hit on a reoccurring theme that I am truly passionate about investigating: the art of storytelling.

“The best collections are when we have a story behind it. We have a person connection. We know how much these things meant to a person. This is very important to us. We look at a couple different
things when we are collecting here. Is there an Ohio connection? Or if it is not necessarily Ohio but an Ohioan who had a collection with a story behind it.”

“We are very, very big into stories now. If your collection includes how you felt about something or the experience that you had with that thing, it makes it that much more valuable.”

“The stories about the famous Ohioans are great, and impressive and we love our Warren Harding collections, but we also like to know what regular everyday Ohioans were experiencing, how they felt about being Ohioans, what life was like during big history events.”

“We are so obsessed with the story idea here. It has to be more than just the item. We have got to encourage people in later years to find value in that item. If you can really empathize with somebody because you understand where they are coming from, then that tends to encourage the value aspect.”

Interviewee 5 shared my concern about preserving these personal narratives and how her patrons share the same grief.

“I hear so often, just at our reference desk, people almost apologize when they try and work on their genealogy, because they always mention, 'I should have talked to Grandma more about this, but when I was younger I didn't care and now grandmas gone.' We hear that quite often. I always tell them you are not alone. It is kind of something to regret. You aren’t unusual that you didn't talk to grandma.”

We talked about the demographic that usually partakes in this activity, and my concerns about why younger generations do not seem interested.

“Family historians, they really are the ones that are interested in preserving things and communicating electronically. I'm amazed at how you think of older generations who are scared of computers. Not if you’re a genealogist. If you’re a genealogist you are on the cutting edge of the scanning, emailing back and forth. I don't know how many blogs are out there for genealogists but I wouldn't be surprised if there were. I don't care what age they are. they have just figured out that this is the best way to get them what they want. And they
INTERVIEWS

are trying to get other people interested. So communicating now is communicating electronically and that is the way they are willing to do it.”

Another reoccurring theme was presented in the discussion—the power of visual storytelling through photography.

“Even if you are not a family historian I’ve noticed that photographs seem to be the thing that really drives the older generation to get technology. Or even Skyping so that they can talk to their grandkids.”

“One of the big things I will tell you about the photographs, especially here, and this is always a problem, because my family has old family photo albums, where they didn’t label what it is because they are never going to forget who great aunt so and so is. This is problem we have with our collections now. We have a lot of donations that the photos are not identified. We know who donated them and we have a sense of when that person lived and where they lived, but then you’ve got all the pictures that they donated and didn’t identify who’s in them or where they were taken, or when they were taken. So if there was some sort of way to encourage people, simply to identify what they have, that would be great.”

“If they wrote anything next to the picture it wasn’t who it was or when it was taken but something like “we had a lot of fun at the beach!” which are cute comments but it would be nice it was like so and so at the beach July, 1921.”
Focus: how to interest others in storytelling

I was a fan of Interviewee 6’s work and was encouraged by a photojournalism students to write to him. I was unaware of his latest work and was very delighted to see that it revolved around and promoted storytelling. Storytelling, more specifically visual storytelling was a huge theme that I was following and decided to contact him.

excerpts from interview:

Interviewee 6 makes it clear on his personal website that he does not do interviews but provides links to a variety of ones done in the past incase you get your questions answered there.

I decided to ask him about how to motivate people to share their stories, thinking about my prototype and user experience design, as well as convincing people that this is a critical issue that maybe we won’t face in our lifetime, but future family members will.

“The design of the platform is important (has to be beautiful and interesting), but the most important thing is to set good examples. When people see good examples, especially from people they know and admire, they strive to match those examples. That’s very much the approach we’ve been taking...”
Focus: visual storytelling and photojournalism through cell phones

I discovered Interviewee 7 through a newsletter put out by the College of Communication and Information at Kent State University.

I immediately wrote to Interviewee 7 and asked for an interview. Part of my research was studying how cell phone photography was growing in popularity, especially amongst the younger generation and I needed this insight for sections of my prototype.

excerpts from interview:

I asked what Interviewee 7 thought of the younger generations today in the terms of self documentation.

“Young people don’t know who came before them, and they don’t care.”

“It’s the Facebook generation where everything is shared now. The good side of that, maybe without even trying is starting to become an archive of the times. They are collecting. It is not organized in any way and Facebook doesn’t think of itself as an archive, but that’s the modern day museum.”

I was first concerned about the quality of cell phone shots in the use of my prototype and for future use.

“The technology is as such now that it’s almost gotten too good, phone cams are now like a DSLR camera. File sizes are so large and you can do so much with them.”

“A lot more people are using it as a tool now. Maybe in a sense the cell phone is what the daguerreotype was with photography at the turn of the century. It just became available and everyone could be a photographer.”

I shared with Interviewee 7 my issues with photographs not being labeled and how this can be hard for family members as well as archivists and historians to tell what is happening, or when a photo took place.

“Basically, in the past they always stamped the date on pictures. People were real big on taking the photograph, writing on the back of the print photograph. So when you go back now and go to a
garage sale or flea market, and you’ll find these old photographs, you’ll find information often on the back of them. That is what we don’t have today. If it was embedded into a digital file, then yes you might keep it but people don’t do that today. Now for photo journalist it is important. In Photoshop you can see all your information is there and stays with it but photos in Facebook for example, it isn’t.”

“Therefore ten years from now someone is going to look at that picture and go ‘Well I don’t know who it was or where it was taken.’ Unless I look at the metadata I don’t know what it is. Photographers are always looking at the digital metadata.”

“It was only a different generation. I felt like they… people felt like.. it was the norm. Every family had a Hawk-eye Brownie, every family had a photo album, and someone in the family would always write down all of the information. It was really important to keep it.”

Interviewee 7 shared his thoughts about the future of cell phone photography, and how he believes it will be used in the future.

“Everywhere I go I have my Droid. You wouldn’t believe the amazing things I have shot with this thing. I have fun with it everywhere I go.”

“Want to use photos anymore for instant communication. I don’t think people are using it as an archival tool as much. People today want to do something immediately so they can post to Facebook.”

“I am using my phone camera historically. My phone is small, and I can get some really intimate moments since it is easy to use and inconspicuous.”

When asked about his confidence level of users who might take interest in visual storytelling using a cell camera as a tool he believes,

“It can be done. It is all about access and confidence.”

When discussing the rapid disappearance of the family photo album Interviewee 7 says,
“Back then, people were using the camera as a tool of record. Back in biblical times there were scribes. Here is what I see. That was suspect because depending on who was paying you, you might see it a little differently. In photojournalism we have started to become pictorial scribes. We are showing that this is what happens. Photo albums were a way of recording the family. Charting of progress and growth.”
Appendix E
Comparative Analysis
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Existing tools and resources

There are many applications and websites that are currently perpetuating the endeavor of personal documentation in some shape or form. Fourteen of these tools and resources have been studied over the course of this thesis to understand how their features and functionality would compare to the prototype that was being produced.

Limited analysis and bias will likely be evident in some areas do to the fact that I do not own an iPhone or iPad and could only interact with websites and Android accessible apps without restriction.

Path

Path is a free iPhone and Android app that is considered a “smart” journal that helps share life with a close group of people. Provides simple and elegant functionality in a private way to share life, documenting one’s lifestream. This app is based on the intimacy of the connections, not the quantity. This app is just a mobile app and does not have a web component. The interface can be confusing since the users’ paths interweave like much like a newsfeed on a Facebook home page. There is limited customizations, and the features are limited to sharing photos, adding people, sharing a place or location, sharing music one is listening to, sharing a thought, and showing if one is awake or asleep. The app allows users to lock posts to make them private. Posts can also be shared to social media sites.

ShoeBox

Shoebox is a free iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad app developed by the site 1000 memories. This app allows users to scan old paper photos and instantly shares them with family and friends. Users can record stories behind the photographs by adding captions, dates and location information. Users can indicate individuals in the photos through tagging, and share photos instantly through social media sites. Uploading and storage is unlimited and free and all photos uploaded can be accessed, organized, and downloaded from 1000memories.com.

Storytree

Storytree is a free iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad app. Storytree makes it easy to capture and share family stories with the ones you care about. Each Storytree that is created is a private collaborative place where photos, videos, and writings are shared. Every piece of content that is produced is set to private unless the user wants to share it publicly. Storytree is paired with its website story tree.com so anyone with an iPhone who has been invited can access, view, and contribute stories.

Instagram

Instagram is a free iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad app. This app provides a simple way to make and share cell phone photographs with friends and family. Instagram allows users to turn their photos into mini works of art by using custom designed filters and borders to add to the photos. Creations can be shared through social media sites and uploads are unlimited.
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

**Cowbird**

Cowbird is a small community of storytellers that share audio and visual stories and documentaries categorized around certain themes. This site strives to build a public library of human experience for future generations to look back to for guidance. Cowbird is a space for self-reflection and not self-promotion. Cowbird not only has a clean and easy to use user interface, it also promotes the idea of etiquette when sharing one's story. All Cowbird promotes four things from their storytellers: decency, humbleness, legality, and authenticity.

**StoryCorps**

StoryCorps is an independent nonprofit that wants to provide Americans of all backgrounds the opportunity to record, share, and preserve their stories and memories from their everyday lives. They have collected and archived over 40,000 interviews from 80,000 participants, being one of the largest oral history projects of its kind. Millions of listeners across the U.S. tune into StoryCorps weekly NPR Morning Edition broadcasts.

**Dear Photograph**

Is a blog that fuses the past with the present. People from all over the world can send in pictures within a picture along with captions that tell complex stories in a glance. The idea is to revisit an old scene from an old photograph, then reshoot the photo in the present. Readers can respond to the photograph posts and relate their own personal stories.

**LiveOn**

LiveOn is a website where users can archive their most important life stories. Users compose memories on personal timelines, sharing them with close friends and family. LiveOn also protects the timelines so that they may be shared with future generations in the user’s family. Site provides an “Answer A Life Question” feature that allows users to answer in a text or video recording. LiveOn also provides a “Rewind” service that digitizes old photographs and albums for users.

**1000 Memories**

1000 Memories claims to be the best site to organize, share, and discover old photographs and memories of family and friends. Through the site and companion ShoecBox app, 1000 Memories helps bring albums and scrapbooks out of their analog form and onto an online, shareable place. 1000 Memories is a strong believer that mobile is changing the way we share our lives and many individuals are recording more stories and memories more than ever.
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Ancestry

Ancestry.com is a service that offers extensive and unique collections of billions of historical records that have been digitized for use by paying subscribers. This site has over seven billion genealogical records from across the globe and millions of family trees, ultimately becoming the world’s largest online family history resource. Ancestry claims to have built the largest online community of people interested in family histories and are currently working on technologies to encourage present day social networking and collaborative efforts. Currently, more than 105 million photographs, scanned documents, and written stories have been uploaded to Ancestry.com.

CNN iReport

iReport invites participants to be a part of news giant CNN and the coverage of their stories. CNN believes that a global community of citizen journalists can be created by looking at news from different angles which creates a deeper understanding of the event or situation. iReport provides a variety of tools to help users tell their stories and discuss the important issues that are happening around them. Tools are also created to custom a user’s experience so they may follow stories that interest them. The stories in iReport however are not edited, fact-checked, or screened before they are posted.

Pinterest

Pinterest in a virtual pinboard of things that users find on the web and want to collect and share. Users can browse inboards created by other people and gather inspiration for a variety of things, including projects, planning weddings, decorating your home, etc. Users are connected through shared tastes and interests in a simple, user friendly interface. Users are drawn to Pinterest because of the storytelling capabilities, the amount of visual sharing, and the ability to casual observe. Users also enjoy the lack of chatter and the relatively low maintenance compared to other social media sites. There is no pressure to upload daily or keep up with posts, and no concern if profile will be inactive if the user is not posting for long periods of time.

Facebook Timeline

The creators of Facebook timeline wanted to change the user experience to convey feelings. Through Facebook timeline, users can tell their life story or through posts create the feeling of memories by reflecting on the timeline and remember one's own life. The interface and new experience has created confusion because of the new interface, potentially turning away users from wanting to create archives of themselves through social media.

First Person American

This program is on a mission to change the public’s perception of immigrants in the United States through creating a site that allows immigrants to share their personal stories on how living in the United States has influenced their “American” identity. Stories include a video interview, a bio, location and journey visualizations, and tips that the individual would like readers to know.
## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: FEATURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Hulu: Face Match</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
<th><strong>How used in prototype</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps to identify actors in the shows and clips watched. Tells you more about the person in the clip or picture by just hovering the mouse over the person’s face. The video will pause while Face Match is being used.</td>
<td>Used in uploaded video and photographs after keywords and tags have been filled in after upload.</td>
<td>Used primarily as an additional annotation method.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>One in 8 Million</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
<th><strong>How used in prototype</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia documentary series of a collection of stories told with audio and photography that portray everyday New Yorkers.</td>
<td>Clean way to create audio and visual storytelling in short, easy to understand formats. Best use of combing the audio/oral history with the photography.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>SoundCloud</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
<th><strong>How used in prototype</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social platform to record, upload, or create sounds and share them.</td>
<td>Repurpose function where currently users can tag and post comments on certain intervals of the track.</td>
<td>Would use this portion so that users could tag sections of sound in audio recording or video with a memory or story.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Google+: Instant Upload</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
<th><strong>How used in prototype</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Automatically uploads photos and videos as you take them with mobile app. With Instant Upload enabled, photos and videos taken with your phone are automatically uploaded to a private album on Google+.</td>
<td>For prototype mobile app, having a private album to send media to until user can annotate and share on the site with family members.</td>
<td></td>
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<th><strong>Google+: Circles</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to categories social groups, so you can share things with certain people, just like real life.</td>
<td>Repurposing circles so that they are clearly defined with your individual five, and then show how everyone’s five circles work together.</td>
<td></td>
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<th><strong>Cowbird</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Small community of storytellers that share audio and visual stories and documentaries categorized around certain themes. Strives to build a public library of human experience for future generations to look back to for guidance.</td>
<td>Currently users can only post one photo that serves as their story, making it very powerful and meaningful. This prototype would also carry that culture of limiting photos to the best ones that convey a story or memory, but with less restrictions and no categories or themes. The themes will evolve over time.</td>
<td></td>
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<th><strong>Path</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
<th><strong>How used in prototype</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Considered a “smart” journal that helps share life with a close group of people. Simple and private way to share life, documenting one’s lifestream. Based on the intimacy of the connections, not the quantity.</td>
<td>Prototype would share similar experience being that the application is private and shared with only your family members. Also shares same clean and simple user interface making it easy to use and update.</td>
<td></td>
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<th><strong>NY Times: photo slider</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Slider used to compare satellite images before and after a natural disaster using Google Earth.</td>
<td>Repurposed to allow users to upload past photographs, and then upload present photographs comparing the two side by side.</td>
<td></td>
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<th><strong>History Pin</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Site for people to come together from many generations, cultures, and places to share photos from around the world to build up a library of human history.</td>
<td>Shares desire to create a public social history through visuals as well as having many people coming together to share one thing: be it a place or event. This prototype has users celebrating and sharing photos of one common thing: a particular person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<th><strong>History Tunes</strong></th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Site that enhances student learning of American History through telling history through the use of songs.</td>
<td>Shares similar initiatives of this prototype in regards to sharing history and building a social history in a non-traditional way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<th><strong>Google Chrome</strong></th>
<th><strong>What it is</strong></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial depicting a father using the web to share memories of his daughter growing up, building an archive for her to take over when she is older.</td>
<td>Shares enthusiasm to document life’s milestones and memories and promotes the forward thinking to prepare and store these memories now for someone else’s future.</td>
<td></td>
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<th><strong>Twitter: microblog</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>A real-time information network that connects users to latest stories, news, ideas, and opinions. Information is distributed in small bursts or microblogs.</td>
<td>The idea of “tweets” or short bits of information could imitate photo and video annotations and captions.</td>
<td></td>
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## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS: FEATURES

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<td><strong>Facebook: tagging</strong></td>
<td>Gives the ability to identify and reference people or things in photos, videos, and notes. One can also tag in status updates and posts.</td>
<td>Same purpose would be used in this prototype, tagging people, places, and things which builds keywords and increases searchability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adobe Bridge: metadata</strong></td>
<td>A powerful media manager that provides centralized access to files and programs.</td>
<td>A gallery or hub would be created through each user’s profile that acts as a bullpen until content is ready to be published. Here is where all metadata will be entered and where a user can view metadata on others’ content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We Feel Fine: aggregator</strong></td>
<td>Collection of data visualizations depicting human mood and feelings extracted from a variety of sources, including weblogs and blog postings.</td>
<td>Common complaint is that information on loved ones are scattered across multiple sources. This prototype serves as a resource to contain media on ancestors, more specifically their stories and memories, all in one place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>About.me</strong></td>
<td>Is a free service that allows you to create a simple, personal profile page that acts as a guide, pointing users to your content around on the web. It is essentially a one page website about you and your interests.</td>
<td>A simple profile page that has links to all media relating to the user in one spot. Visitors can access the visual narrative of this individual for this page.</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix F
User Personas
**USER PERSONAS**

**Top Secret**
- inconsistent interest
- very concerned about self documentation
- digital/tech and analogue savvy
- doesn’t use smart phone
- 40+
- takes photos
- female
- loves to write
- extremely hesitant to try new things
- avoids social media

**The Historian**
- consistent interest
- concerned about self documentation
- analogue savvy
- has smart phone, doesn’t use much
- 60+
- takes photos, records audio
- male
- loves to write
- hesitant to try new things
- neutral social media/ hesitation posting

**Lazy Leisure**
- inconsistent interest
- not very concerned about self documentation
- digital/tech savvy
- has and uses smart phone
- 50+
- takes photos, records audio, records video
- male
- prefers visual media
- try anything, abandon easily
- neutral social media

**Type A**
- consistent interest
- very concerned about self documentation
- digital/tech and analogue savvy
- use smartphone extensively
- 18-35
- takes photos, records video
- male and female
- loves to write and visual
- hesitant to try new things or change
- avoids most social media

**Family Historian**
- consistent interest
- very concerned about self documentation
- digital/tech and analogue savvy
- use smartphone but not a pro
- 35-70
- takes photos, records audio, records video
- female
- loves to write and visual media
- will try anything, frustrated easily
- craves social media and connections

**Social Butterfly**
- inconsistent interest
- not concerned about self documentation
- digital/tech savvy
- use smartphone extensively
- 16-24
- takes photos, records video
- male and female
- enjoys visual media
- will try anything new
- craves social media and connections
The following pages are an exercise in mapping user groups. The previous personas all detailed certain attributes and behaviors that were shared amongst the users. The following diagram is an example of how the various labels can be broken into sections.

Each section acts as a container for the persona “dots.” The spatial relationship of the persona to other another persona is purely arbitrary. The purpose of this exercise is to map and code user patterns at a glance and record areas of overlap as well as which personas behave similarly in certain areas.

When more user tests, surveys, and questionnaires are completed, these maps will evolve into a more robust and clearly defined tool where spectrums of behaviors and attitudes can be studied on a Likert Scale or rating scale of sorts.

Unfortunately, insufficient data was collected in order to expand upon these models.
CODING DATA: MAPPING USER GROUPS

NOTE: This particular map shows what how all of the personas stack up in all of the categories. From here it is easy to see personas that group together and act similarly.
CODING DATA: MAPPING USER PATTERNS

NOTE: This diagram notes the relationship between the Top Secret persona and the Type A persona. Both match in 71% of the categories.
NOTE: This diagram notes the relationship between the Lazy Leisure persona and the Social Butterfly persona. Both match in 71% of the categories.
NOTE: This diagram notes the relationship between the Top Secret persona, the Type A persona, and the Family Historian persona. The Family Historian matches with one or both of the other personas in 57% of the categories.
NOTE: This diagram notes the relationship between the Family Historian persona and the Social Butterfly. Both match in 43% of the categories.
CODING DATA: MAPPING USER PATTERNS

NOTE: This diagram notes the relationship between the Top Secret persona and the The Historian persona. Both match in 43% of the categories.
References


