

Looking For a Genealogy Software Solution?

THOUGH THERE ARE a number of software packages which genealogists can use to store, document and report on their ancestry, learning how to use such a software program, maintaining it over the years (to upgrade or not?) and frustrations with limitations can all make for a disheartening and stressful experience.

AGES-online, <http://www.ages-online.com/index.cfm>, was created for the purpose of “free[ing] the genealogy researcher from the burdens of cumbersome software so they can rediscover their passion for exploring their family history”.

I can identify with this. I originally stored and documented all the information for my Ancestral research in Word Documents (.doc) (after using PAF and several other, now obsolete, programs). I created narratives for each branch of the family and as new data was found, I entered the relevant information, cited my sources with footnotes and, at some point, published the information compiled to date. Eventually, after about 10 addenda were printed (it’s hard to correlate addenda back to the original research at this stage) and my professional research business was growing, it was time to invest in a software package. Though I can say that they have come a long way in the last 22 years, I still find many genealogy software programs a bit confining and do a lot of documenting outside of the software I currently use. However, I have found AGES-online to be one of the better genealogy software programs I’ve tried.

WHAT IS AGES-ONLINE?

AGES-online is, essentially, a

Diane L. Richard evaluates the AGES-online software package.

family tree builder. Some of the features are:

- Intuitive data entry and easy navigation help you quickly and easily build your family tree.
- Create and maintain your family tree entirely on the Internet.
- Whether you are a beginner or a professional, AGES-online can help you maintain and share

- Introduction video and video tutorial.
- Photo and image upload.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

To help expedite my use of the online features, I uploaded an abbreviated GEDCOM covering two families and about four generations of a current client project (a total of 41 people). Both the individual details and the “notes” I had associated with each person were transferred.

Immediately, I found it easy to search on (using “find”) the names, to locate the one that I wanted to start with. Once located, his information, his wife’s information and a summary of

The screenshot displays the 'FAMILY GROUP FORM' interface for creating or editing a family tree. It features a 'FOCUS PERSON' section with the following details:

- Enter Focus Person's Name:** Prefix (empty), Given/Middle Name (James Samuel), Surname (Christy), Suffix (empty), Gender (M), and a Share icon.
- Enter Birth Information:** Date Accuracy (About), Date (1823), Country (United States), State/Province (Ohio), County (empty), and City (empty).
- Enter Death Information:** Date Accuracy (Exact), Date (07 Dec 1889), Country (empty), State/Province (empty), County (empty), and City (empty).

There is an 'Add Focus Image' button on the right side of the form.

Sample of a Focus Person Overview.

your family tree.

- Everything you upload or enter is backed up on a nightly basis.
- Collaborate with as many family and friends as you want to help build your family tree.
- Simply point and click to build your own personalized genealogy website which you can share with anyone you choose.
- Easy source and citation entry.

their children were displayed.

I could then play around with the different features by adding family members and events, creating “resources” and then adding citations where appropriate. It is easy to do all of this. And, you can always go back to edit an entry and/or relationship if you later determine that you were mistaken or incom-

plete. Once the information is entered or updated, then it's time to generate a report. At the most basic membership level you have the following options: Family Group Sheets, Outline Descendant Reports, Descendant Genealogy Register Reports, Marriage Reports and Parentage Reports. Once a report is generated, you can then print it.

Though I started by importing a GEDCOM file, you can start by entering data for yourself or another family member and use the tools on the website to build your family tree from scratch. Regardless of whether you start with imported data or build your tree in real-time on the website, the functionality of all the features is identical.

Obviously, there are more features than an article like this can touch upon — exploring the website is the best way to better appreciate its function and features. For example, neat features allow you to set different permissions for each user, and the records display a "Change Stamp", identifying who made a change and when.

A series of video tutorials are available, via the main page and the link labeled "Watch Our Video Demo", covering such topics as how you would get started either by importing your GEDCOM file or using the Family Group Form. How you manage spouse and child relationships, delete individuals and perform other family maintenance. There are also tutorials on names and aliases, adding individual and family events, military service, personal details, etc. There are even video tutorials about sources and citations and other features.

After you view a tutorial, it's easy to get back to your family data by selecting the "my AGES" tab at the top of each page.

SECURITY FEATURES

An element of AGES-online that I like is that you get to set the secu-

rity credentials. This means that you can control, for each activity, whether you will grant a particular user access to a function or the ability to perform certain actions. Options include granting access to: GEDCOM Import, Add/Delete Person, Add/Edit/Delete Details, Add/Edit/Delete Repositories, Add/Edit/Delete Sources, Add/Edit/Delete Citations, Add/Edit/Delete Family Stories, Add/Delete Focus Image, Add/Edit/View Notes, Edit iShare and Web Preferences. This way, your collaborators can make

The bottom line is that if you want to use the services of AGES-online at any level beyond the most basic, including creating all kinds of charts, having a website, attaching photos, etc., you will definitely want to consider the "standard" level or the "enhanced" level once it becomes available.

CONCLUSION

Finding the tools that best support your needs for documenting and sharing your genealogy research is a personal choice. There is a rea-

son that there are so many different genealogy software programs and online services available, which all offer varied approaches to how you might do this — not every person wants to manage their genealogy research the same way. In some regards, AGES-online just represents another option for you to consider. The key question is, does it match up with your personal wish list for what your family tree software needs to do?

If you have not yet found a software program to use with your genealogy research and/or you really don't want to invest in a software program, or you've been looking around for an alternative to a traditional family tree software program, try out AGES-online. If you don't give it a try (which is free),

you won't know if it could be the genealogy family tree service for you.

AGES-online Feature List			
Try it FREE for 30 Days. Prices represent Annual Subscription Costs:			
	Economy	Standard	Coming Soon Enhanced
[+ expand all] [- collapse all]			
Full Online Access	✓	✓	✓
Full Individual & Family Edit Capabilities	✓	✓	✓
Reports	✓	✓	✓
Charts	✓	✓	✓
Ancestor Tree - Standard, Coming soon	✓	✓	✓
Ancestor Tree - Vertical, Coming soon	✓	✓	✓
Descendant Tree - Standard		✓	✓
Hourglass Tree - Standard		✓	✓
Adoption Tree			✓
Search	✓	✓	✓
Utilities & Support Features	✓	✓	✓
Personalized Genealogy Website		✓	✓
Multimedia Support		✓	✓
Streaming Media Support			✓

Current and planned features for the AGES subscription levels.

more hands-on changes, and others might only be able to view what you have created — it's all up to you!

TRIAL AND SUBSCRIPTION VERSIONS

The best way to explore AGES-online is to sign up for the 30-day free trial.

Currently, annual subscriptions are available at two levels with an "Enhanced level" planned. The latter will add charting, website, image and video capabilities. The Economy level is \$39.95 US, and the Standard is \$59.95 US.

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