



Marketing: ATTRACTING YOUNGER MEMBERS

Deborah Long, [Triangle Jewish Genealogical Society \(2015\)](#) (revised April 2015)

Let's face it: genealogy is a perfect obsession for older adults. We generally have the time to devote several hours a day of intensely focused research. We are more likely to be interested in history, too, since now all of our belonging are antiques and anything from the 1960s or before is considered ancient history!

Nevertheless, if our societies are to survive, we need to have younger people, as least younger than 60, join our organizations and become actively involved. The way to get them involved in our leadership is first to get them interested in genealogy.

Here are some ideas:

1. School teachers who ask students to do research on their own families often get young people started on a genealogical quest. Why not **sponsor a contest** at a local school and award the best family research project a free membership in your society as well as a monetary award or family tree software program?
2. **Go to where the young people are (school or synagogue) and deliver an exciting program.** Your program should have an exciting angle—a Jewish mobster (Meyer Lansky), a famous celebrity (Leonard Nimoy), a strong woman (too many to name). Set up a display table and when a young person goes by, ask them if they have ever wondered about their Jewish ancestry. Ask a young person if he or she knows the origin of their names.
3. **Make sure you have a Facebook page for your society.** This is how young people discover; share ideas; and generally talk about what's exciting or cool to them at the moment. You can also put a Twitter feed on your website that will help young people believe that they can *engage with you* in a manner that is familiar and relevant to them.
4. **Make it easy and affordable to join.** My society only charges \$1 to students (of any age.) **Make it possible to join and pay online.** Make it as easy for people to act upon their impulse to join as possible.
5. **Bring a young person to your meetings.** Make sure he or she is introduced properly and engaged in conversation by the other members.
6. **Offer an interested younger member a significant role in your society** for doing something great with technology for your organization—organizing your library, managing Facebook, setting up websites.

You may also find this article of interest:

<http://blog.findmypast.com/2013/youth-in-genealogy-generation-y-redefines-family-history-research/>

And here are some additional ideas from Frank Werner of the Jewish Genealogical Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County (JGSCV) in California:

THOUGHTS ON ATTRACTING YOUNGER GENERATIONS TO GENEALOGY

The pursuit of genealogy research is for the most part a pastime for seniors whereas younger generations seem to show little interest. This dichotomy can be detrimental to building future membership in our Society as well as denying the pleasure and benefits that genealogical studies provide in building family relationships and family pride. I believe it is

incumbent on us (as) members of JGSCV to be concerned about attracting the interest of our children and grandchildren in order to promote and retain family memories so that they will not fade away.

With this in mind, I have introduced this topic and challenge to the Board of JGSCV with the objective of creating a program that will broaden the genealogical interest amongst our multi generations. While our children may well be too occupied with careers and varied social obligations to become involved, this cannot be an excuse with respect to our grandchildren. Our Society should accept an obligation to instill within our youngest generation the same thrill, passion and interest in the pursuit of family history that we possess. It is never too late to start this process, nor does it have to be overwhelming. So, get your thinking could kick off a meaningful program.

1. Devote one meeting a year for an intergenerational meeting that will capture the imagination of the membership's children and grandchildren through innovative programming. This might be volunteer presentations of a member with his/her child or grandchild offering a specific finding/family story, et al, In other words, a truly family project with JGSCV providing a platform for such a team.
2. Invite a local religious school's classes to one of our meetings and involve them in a program by offering a stage for presentations prepared through classroom studies that might be assisted by one of our members.
3. Create a prize for a student contest in Jewish genealogy that is open to synagogue schools in the local areas.
4. Offer a workshop for students at local schools.
5. Have students develop new approaches to genealogical research via the various social media.

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