

About the committee WHO WE ARE

Records Preservation & Access Committee

Federation of Genealogical Societies

www.fgs.org, Over 1,000,000 individual genealogists represented by more than 500 societies.

National Genealogical Society

www.ngsgenealogy.org
Almost 10,000 individual members and 650 society and library subscribers reaching over 300,000 genealogists.

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies

www.iajgs.org, Over 70 member organizations representing approximately 10,000 individuals.

American Society of Genealogists

www.fasg.org,
The scholarly honorary society limited to fifty fellows.

Association of Professional Genealogists

www.apgen.org
Representing over 1,800 professional genealogists.

Board for Certification of Genealogists

www.bcgcertification.org
Representing over 300 board-certified genealogists.

International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists

www.icapgen.org, Representing over 200 professional accredited genealogists.

You can make a difference!

www.fgs.org/rpac

Addressing THE FACTS

Family history research is the fastest growing leisure activity in the United States.

According to a survey conducted by Harris Interactive (March 2012):

- Four in five Americans have an interest in learning about their family history.
- For nearly two in three (65%) Americans, learning about family history before they arrived in the U. S. is one of the most important benefits of researching family history.

FamilySearch has 6.875 billion historic records on microfilm that are being digitized and eventually indexed. Those records are available today at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, which has over 400,000 visitors each year. The microfilm can also be ordered from local Family History Centers across the U. S. for a small fee. Facts about FamilySearch.org, the largest free family history research site on the Internet:

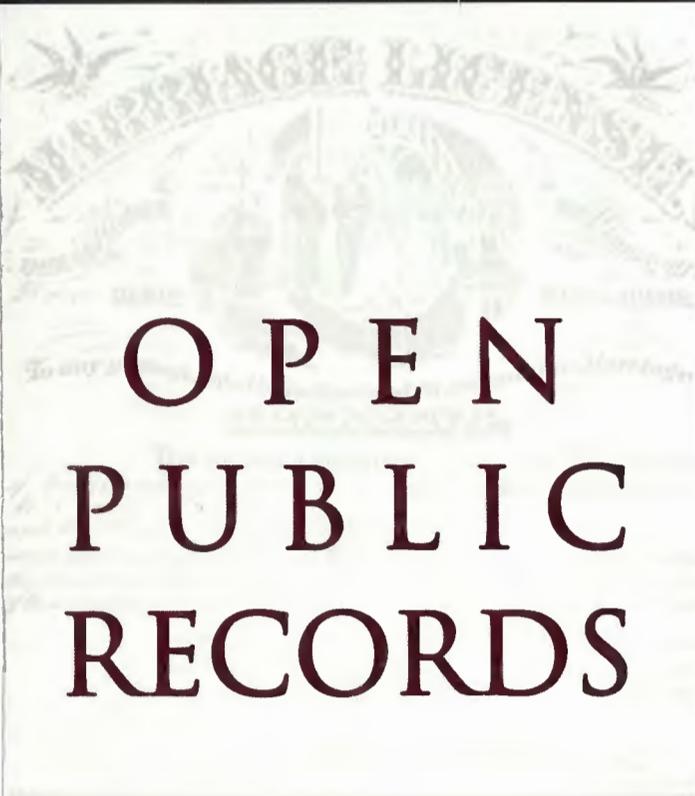
- Over 5 million average daily page views
- Over 1 million registered users
- Over 85,000 average daily visitors

Facts about Ancestry.com, the largest online family history research site in the U.S., with more than 2 million paying subscribers:

- More than 11 billion records
- More than 44 million family trees
- Largest online collection of historical U.S. military records.

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THE CASE FOR



OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS

RECORDS PRESERVATION
& ACCESS COMMITTEE

www.fgs.org/rpac

Supporting the
genealogical community
across the United States
in every county
in all 50 states and U. S. Territories

KEEP PUBLIC RECORDS OPEN...

Addressing THE PROS

- The U.S. Surgeon General encourages families to research cause of death of parents, grandparents, and great grandparents
- The Social Security Administration publishes *The Social Security Death Index (SSDI)* so lenders, businesses, and government agencies can check online to make sure someone is not using the social security number of a deceased person.
- People need access to public records for proof of birth for passports and drivers' licenses.
- U.S. Census records are available after 72 years.
- Americans are interested in researching their cultural heritage which includes information contained in vital records.
- Genealogists are the single largest constituency of users for state archives.
Source: State Archivists' State of the State Report, January 2007

Addressing THE MYTHS

- There is no proof open records significantly contribute to ID theft or fraud.
- Social Security numbers are rarely stolen from documents found in government offices, including court houses. They are usually stolen by thieves breaking into banking and business databases or conducting Internet scams.
- County and state vital records were not used to commit the terrorist acts on September 11, 2001, yet state legislatures have passed more than 1,000 laws changing access to public records.
Source: Robert Tanner, AP National Writer,
Analysis: States Steadily Restricting Info,
www.sunshineweek.org, March 2006

For more information:

- Visit www.fgs.org/rpac
- Read *The Case for Public Records, A Position Paper*
<http://apgen.org/publications/press/APG-KGROW.pdf>
- Read *Strategy for Records Preservation and Access* available at www.fgs.org/rpac



The Records ACCESS WE NEED

The Records Preservation and Access Committee supports open access to all vital records. Access to vital records helps estranged families find each other and reunite. Open access enables families to research the cause of death for cousins and extended families, making it possible to identify and treat inherited diseases.

- Some 16 states which have open access to vital records, have not experienced any greater frequency of identity fraud than the more restrictive states. Identity theft usually occurs when a large database is compromised not as a result of access to vital records.
- Birth, marriage, divorce, and death records should be open to the public and available for research for informational purposes.
- The mother's maiden name is an important family link and should continue to be provided on vital records. Banks and other financial institutions now provide a broad choice of other security questions.
- Adoption records should be opened to an adoptee who has attained the legal age of majority. Adoption records should be considered open records to the public after 72 years, the same time frame which is applied to U. S. Census records.
- Informational copies should be available for the general public and identified as for "genealogical purposes only."

In states which have restricted access to vital records, RPAC works with the legislatures to achieve more open access.