# Chapter 5: High Research Standards in Personal Research

In this chapter, you will study skills and tools that will help you have high research standards in personal research.  These are also applicable to professional research and when you are helping someone as a consultant. You will learn the following:

* Basic preservation concepts you should know pertaining to storing family heirlooms, memories, or documents.
* How to use an online catalog for a library or archive.
* What search strategies will help you conduct effective searches.
* Basic internet skills that are useful for family history work.
* How to apply High Research Standards (HRS) in your personal research to ensure quality.

## Libraries and Archives

### Study Questions

* SQ: How can libraries and archives be valuable in family history work?
* SQ: What is the difference between a library and an archive?

To uphold the Genealogical Proof Standard, specifically GPS 1 Reasonably Exhaustive Research, it is important to know where to look to find records. Records are found in both physical repositories and digital (online) respositories.

Libraries and archives are physical repositories that house documents or records that could be useful for genealogical research. Archives and libraries have different types of collections but are similar in that they all hold records of historical significance. Libraries usually hold books and reference works, journals and magazines, maps, and sometimes manuscripts. They often offer classes and research help. Archives usually hold official government documents, diaries, letters, photographs, rare books, and artifacts. Libraries sometimes have an archive section, and archives sometimes have a library section.

## Preservation

### Study Questions

* SQ: What should you consider when it comes to preserving your family memories and artifacts?
* SQ: How might you go about preserving some of those memories or artifacts?
* SQ: What family memories or artifacts do you have that you should preserve?

Libraries, museums, and archives carefully preserve the documents and records they house. When you visit a library or archive, they will have specific rules about the handling of their records and artifacts. It is important for you, as a researcher, to know how records are preserved and how you can preserve your own documents, heirlooms, and family memories and help others do the same.

The definition of preservation is “the act, process, or result of preserving something: such as the activity or process of keeping something valued alive, intact, or free from damage or decay.”1 Now consider this definition in the context of personal family history. We want to keep our valuable documents, heirlooms, and family memories whole and keep these things from being destroyed. If we preserve family memories and artifacts, we will preserve our family’s history.

The following information on the Preservation section is taken from a video series from the Church History Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.2

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### Health Precautions

Facilities that handle heirlooms and artifacts often have filtration systems to filter harmful fumes, dust, and mold. Workers might wear lab coats and change clothes when they return home. When examining heirlooms or artifacts at home, it is important to protect yourself by wearing gloves and a dust mask or handkerchief, and possibly an old shirt.

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### Handling

Heirlooms, documents, and artifacts should be protected from oils that come from our skin. This can be done by wearing gloves.  “Examine the item before handling, and look for inherent weaknesses. For example, if it is a fragile paper document, handle it as little as possible. Place papers in folders to carry them around, and place textiles on sturdy supports … be sure that you lay [an object] on its most stable side, and if necessary, place it on a padded support. When you move an item, decide beforehand where the item will be placed, and clear enough space for it. Be sure the pathway where you walk is clear … ”3

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### Housing

Store artifacts in containers that “are acid-free and chemically stable, and not likely to cause damage to the artifacts.”4 Containers will protect artifacts from light and reduce fading. They also reduce fluctuations in temperature and humidity, which could damage the item.

Archival quality containers come in many shapes and sizes, for instance, envelopes, folders, plastic sleeves, and boxes. You can find containers by doing an internet search or contacting a local library or archive to ask where they purchase their archival storage containers.

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### Preservation Through Organization

Organization helps preserve heirlooms, documents, and artifacts by reducing the risks of loss, damage because of excessive handling, and misidentification. If you have many artifacts (such as physical photos) they should be sorted chronologically, by event, by person, by location, or some other way. You may need to determine which are most important to keep and which are not. Artifacts should then be labeled using archival labels or paper for artifacts, or a photographic marking pen or pencil on the bottom edge or back of photographs. Identify people, places, dates, and previous owners of artifacts. Relevant stories are very important for future generations to identify the importance of the item. Label the container, document your organization method, and indicate where items are stored.

### Storage

Libraries and museums have special storage environments to protect artifacts. How can we best store our heirlooms and artifacts? If an article is of significant historical value, consider donating it to a library, archive, or museum.  The best thing you can do with your artifacts and heirlooms at home is to store them in containers in the coolest driest part of your home, in areas where clean air can circulate. Keep items away from pipes, cooling units, exterior walls, food, drink, and plants, and off the floor. If this type of storage is not possible, just do the best you can.

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### Digital Storage

Photographs, video and audio files, and journals are often kept in files on computers. These files are at risk for being lost, deleted, or corrupted, and do not last forever because of changes in technology. To preserve these precious memories, store digital files in up-to-date formats, on reliable media, and in multiple places. For example, you may wish to store files on an external hard drive (or multiple hard drives) that are kept separately from your home computer or mobile device and also in cloud-based storage, which is online data storage using the internet. You can do an internet search to determine which cloud-based storage is best for your needs.

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### Safe Home Display

Light damage to heirlooms and artifacts cannot be undone but you can keep them from fading more by keeping them completely out of light. Storing artifacts in rooms without windows is ideal but not always possible. Keep them out of direct sunlight and lights that emit UV rays, such as fluorescent lights. Window glass can be coated with material that blocks UV emissions. If you want to display photographs, consider hanging a copy and keeping originals elsewhere.

Proper framing by a professional will help protect artifacts and heirlooms. Textiles, such as quilts, should be fully supported to reduce the pull of gravity, kept away from high traffic areas, and kept away from the floor. Large objects should be placed on their most stable side.

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### Conservation

Cleaning and repairing photographs and other artifacts could lead to irreparable damage. Finding a professional conservator is recommended for this sort of work but may be expensive. Learn the history of the item and consider whether the item is worth the amount of money it might take to repair it, or whether you can rehouse the item to prevent further damage.

Conserving items yourself is discouraged, but if you decide to proceed, you should understand the materials you are working with and how the new materials will affect the old materials. For example, lamination bonds plastic to paper, tape can make paper brittle, and glue can chemically alter material it is applied to. Sometimes it is best to leave the item as it is.

Carefully preserving heirlooms, documents, and artifacts will ensure that they can be enjoyed for generations. You can learn more by searching for courses online. Community colleges and universities also offer courses on preservation.

## Library Catalogs

### Study Questions

* SQ: How can a library catalog help you find records?
* SQ: What are the search categories for libraries and archives?
* SQ: How do the “?” and “\*” symbols help you in a search of an online catalog?

In the past, and sometimes still today, libraries used card catalogs to help organize and locate books. Card catalogs were drawers filled with cards that listed bibliographic information, such as the author, title, and subject of each book. Users would flip through the cards to find the correct book and its call number. The call number indicated where the book could be found on the shelves.

Today, many libraries and archives use online catalogs instead of card catalogs to organize and locate records.  An online catalog is a database that contains bibliographic, location, and format information for everything within that library or archive. Once you have located an item in an online catalog, you can view it digitally on your computer (if a digital copy is available) or in person, or you can request a copy or transcript of that information.  Billions of original documents can be viewed online using online library catalogs.Librarians or archivists can help you learn to navigate the library catalog. Library catalogs are valuable for helping you know what information is available to answer your research question, which is important as you create your research plan.

To search an online catalog, go to the website for the library or archive. Locate the "catalog" button by searching at the top or bottom of the page or in areas with terms likemenu, e-resources, or library services. You can sometimes locate it by entering the term "catalog" into the search bar.

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### Search Categories

Once you find the online catalog, you can search it in many ways. Most **library**catalogs can be searched by entering one of the following in the search bar:

* Author
* Title
* Subject
* Keyword

**Archive** catalogs tend to be more specialized, but usually can be searched by the following:

* Keyword
* Time period
* Reference
  + A library gives each book a unique call number. An archive gives each artifact a unique number called a reference. Some archive websites allow you to search by the reference.

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### Search Strategies

If you cannot locate what you are seeking, try altering your search terms completely and attempting another search, but often only a small change in the search terms is needed. Sometimes when you search a catalog, whether online or in person, names or places might be spelled in different ways. Fortunately, you can use a wildcard search for online catalogs to help you look for variants. There are several different wildcards, but these two are the most common:

* A question mark (?) can replace exactly one character.
  + Example: Searching for "Jo?n" tells the search engine to look for both "John" and "Joan."
* An asterisk (\*) can replace any number of characters.
  + What are other examples of names that would be included in this search?
  + Example: Searching for "J\*n" tells the search engine to look for a name which begins with J and ends with n. Therefore, your search results will include "John," "Joan," and "Juan," as well as "Johnson," "Jensen," and "Jackson."

## Libraries

### Study Questions

* SQ: Who can access the BYU-Pathway Library and who can access the FamilySearch Library?
* SQ: How can you find other libraries near you?
* SQ: How might the libraries below help you in your family history research?
* SQ: How can a librarian help you in your family history research?

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### BYU-Pathway Library

As a BYU-Pathway Worldwide student, you have access to an amazing collection at the [BYU-Pathway Library](https://library.byupathway.edu/).  The library holds online articles, research guides, and e-books. It offers you access to databases, citation helps, genealogical reference books, and library catalogs. Access these by using the Search the Library Bar, clicking on Guides, or clicking on Databases and using the search bar there. To access a list of databases, click on Databases. You can get help with the library by clicking Contact a Librarian or by starting a chat using the chat icon. Take a minute to explore library.

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### FamilySearch Library

The [FamilySearch Library](https://www.familysearch.org/en/library/) is the largest genealogical library in the world and is located in Salt Lake City, Utah, although many of its resources are available  online or at FamilySearch centers worldwide, and available to anyone.6The library houses a world-renowned collection of records for over 110 countries, territories, and possessions. The microfilm collection at the library has over 1.6 million rolls of microfilmed records. Holdings also include 727,000 microfiche; 356,000 books, serials, and other formats; 4,500 periodicals; and 3,725 electronic resources including subscriptions to major genealogical websites. You can find these collections in the [FamilySearch Library Catalog](https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog), and many of them are digitized and viewable online. The FamilySearch Library also provides valuable research help and genealogical learning resources through librarians and professional genealogists.

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### Community and University Libraries

Community libraries often provide access to the Internet, genealogical databases and websites, historical books, reference books, and sometimes archives and special collections. Librarians are trained to help you locate materials and direct you in your research. You can find community and university libraries near you by searching the Internet.

Some local community or university libraries allow access to their resources to anyone who visits the library in person. Many libraries require that you be a local resident or student to borrow their materials or access them online, but may issue library access cards to non-residents or non-students for a fee. Some libraries offer interlibrary loan or photocopying services. If the online library resources you require are part of a larger database system, it might be possible to access the same database through your local library association. To discover ways to access a library's resources, contact the library directly to see what options are available.

## GPS and the Internet

### Study Question

SQ: How can the Internet help you achieve high research standards?

Review the elements of the GPS and consider how the Internet is used to meet each standard.

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### GPS 1: Reasonably Exhaustive Research

* Use the Internet to be able to determine the existence of libraries and archives.
* Use library and archive online catalogs to determine which records are available and to locate and search records digitally and in person.

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### GPS 2: Complete and Accurate Source Citations

* Use online catalog description details to help you build complete and accurate source citations.
* Use online source citation generators and be able to adjust formatting of automatically generated citations to ensure they are complete and accurate.

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### GPS 3: Thorough Analysis and Correlation

* Use online catalog description details to analyze the sources and creator(s) of the sources.
* Use the Internet to help you locate historical and cultural information that will help you analyze the lives of your ancestors.

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### GPS 4: Resolution Of Conflicting Evidence

* All the skills needed for elements 1–3 above help you resolve conflicting evidence because you have located all materials and are able to analyze them appropriately to recognize when a conflict exists and how to resolve each conflict.

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### GPS 5: Soundly Written Conclusion Based on the Strongest Evidence

* All the skills needed for elements 1–3 above help you make informed conclusions based on the strongest evidence because you have located all materials and are able to analyze them appropriately to come to a strong conclusion.
* Use internet word processing tools (like Google Docs) to write reports and/or collaborate with other writers.

## **Web Skills**

### Study Questions

* SQ: Why is it important to feel comfortable using computers and the Internet?
* SQ: What can you do if your internet connection is not working?
* SQ: What skills do you need to strengthen to comfortably use the internet?
* SQ: What is usually required to create an account on a website?
* SQ: Who can use FamilySearch?
* SQ: How can you access FamilySearch ‘partner’ websites?
* SQ: What should you do if your initial search yields no results?
* SQ: What should you do if a search yields too many results?

### 

### Internet Skills for Genealogy

The range of computer and internet skills and competency is wide. There is no way you can learn everything you need to know about using computers and the Internet in one chapter; this will be a lifelong effort. However, there are some basic skills that a researcher should acquire to be able to complete personal research that aligns with the elements of the GPS.

You will learn more about and practice many internet skills as you complete further studies. For now, learn about the basic skills below. Please **practice**any skills that are new to you.

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### How to Find Public Internet Access

Having internet access is vital to your success as an online student and genealogist. Internet connections are not always stable, and you may experience gaps in your internet service. However, you are still required to complete your homework and/or submit finished projects to clients. If none of the options below are possible, please contact your instructor when you are able. There are several things you can do when you experience connectivity problems, such as the following:

* Use a computer, laptop, smartphone, or tablet using data services.
  + Be aware that data services cost money and you will likely face limitations regarding what you can do on these types of devices as opposed to using a laptop or desktop computer.
  + Also, your smartphone or tablet can be used as a backup when your home internet service goes down only if it uses a different internet service than your home.
* Use the computers at your local FamilySearch Center. To find one near you, view [FamilySearch Centers](https://www.familysearch.org/locations/). Every church building of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is now considered a FamilySearch Center because you can access the Internet there if you know the password. Ask a church leader for the password.
* As a neighbor, family member, or friend to use their computer or Internet service.
* Go to your local library.
* Go to a company in town that offers free internet. McDonald’s and Starbucks often have free Wi-Fi for their customers.
* Use a computer lab at a local university or community college.
* Connect to a separate hotspot.
  + This typically requires a separate data plan and connection line than your home Internet.
  + If your hotspot shares either of these features, you can still use your hotspot to access the Internet when you are away from home, but you won't be able to use your hotspot as a backup when your home Internet connection goes down.
* Trouble-shoot and fix the problem yourself. Troubleshooting might include clearing your cache or cookies, turning your computer off and back on, or logging out of a website and logging back in.
* Hire someone to come fix the problem.

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### Using the Internet

It is important to be familiar with using the Internet. Below are a few useful and necessary skills that will help make using the internet even more valuable.

* Knowing about URLs and address bars
* Recognizing clickable links
* Using navigation buttons
* Opening links in new tabs
* Using multiple tabs
* Setting bookmarks
* Viewing your search history
* Downloading files
* Saving images

If you are unfamiliar with any of the things in the list above, you may wish to do further research online to learn about them. Most of them can be found in this [Using a Web Browser](https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/internetbasics/using-a-web-browser/1/) tutorial. You should learn about and practice the tasks listed above that are new to you when you are able.

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### Genealogical Websites

Many genealogical websites can be accessed for free. Some can be accessed for free but require a fee to view certain collections. FamilySearch is a completely free genealogical website; it just requires you to register for an account. FamilySearch also offers free access to certain partner websites and their collections if you are a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If you are not a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you can access these accounts for free at a FamilySearch Center or by using the FamilySearch Center Premium Content extension.

The FamilySearch Center Premium Content extension allows access to premium websites and other content (including some subscription websites and limited-access records) and can be added to your Chrome browser for use with the Internet at church buildings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. All are welcome. More [information about this extension](https://www.familysearch.org/en/help/helpcenter/article/family-history-center-premium-content-browser-extension) can be found here.

How to get free access to the partner sites (for church members):

1. Go to [familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org/en/) and select **Create Account**. You will need your church membership information. You can find your membership record number in the following places: On your temple recommend, in Membership Information from your profile in the Member Tools mobile app, or in the Profile > Membership area of your account when you sign in to [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](https://account.churchofjesuschrist.org/membership) website.
2. While logged into your FamilySearch account, create accounts with several partner sites (unless you already have accounts at the sites listed below) by following the instructions in the [Latter-day Saints Access page.](https://www.familysearch.org/campaign/partneraccess/)

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### How to Create an Online Account

Some websites require that you set up an account to use the resources on that site. You will know you need to set up an account if you see words such as “Login” or “My Account” or if there are instructions on the main page about setting up an account. Before signing up for any online account, consider why you want an account on that site.

There are some typical things that you need to create a user account for a website. They include the following:

1. A username
2. Your email address
3. A password

Some sites are free and some are not. Some may require you to include credit card information or to select and answer security questions, such as “What is your mother’s maiden name?” but those are usually used for paid accounts.

Remember the information you use to set up your account. If you ever forget your username or password, you can request that these sites email you a reminder or send you an email with a recovery link to set up a new password. Remember (or keep a record of) which email address you used and how to access that email account.

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### How to Conduct Online Searches

As you do quality genealogical research online, you do not simply enter a name into a general database, record what comes out, and consider your research to be finished. You should figure out what you know, decide what you want to discover, and then search within specific collections.There are many ways to search online.

1. The broadest search level is to use a search engine to search the entire web.
   * For example, use Google to search for “Where is Allen County Public Library located?”
2. The next level of search would be to search an entire website.
   * For example, use the “Search Archives.gov” search bar on the National Archives website.
3. A more narrow type of search would be to use an index tied to a search through all indexed record collections on a site.
   * For example, use the “Search” feature on the main page of Ancestry.com, or search a repository catalog such as the “Research Catalog” of the New York Public Library.
4. An even more narrow search would be to search the index for a collection located on a website.
   * For example, search the “1860 United States Census” on FamilySearch.org.
5. A very narrow search would be to search page-by-page of a non-indexed, digitized collection.
   * For example, search the "Civil registration (death notices), South Africa, South West Africa, Rhodesia, Swaziland, etc., 1869-1939" images on FamilySearch.org.

There are limitations to each search level. Just because you do not find what you are looking for does not mean the desired record or collection does not exist; it just means you might need to search elsewhere or filter your search. It may also mean that the internet search features were not available for that item.

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### Filters and Boolean Searches

You can filter your searches in each of the levels above. Start by entering as little information as possible to get more results (for instance, enter a name only). If this provides too many results, you can add more information to your search to narrow them down. (To narrow the results, you could add an event date or place, or another related person’s name.) Websites often provide filter options to help you narrow down your search.

The symbols ? and \* discussed earlier also work for internet and website searches. Boolean searches are searches that use the words AND, OR, or NOT to produce different results.  You can enter an exact search by enclosing the search terms in quotation marks. Consider how these tools might help you in your next online search.

Learn to recognize valuable or credible results from the first several pages of your search results; do not simply look at the first few results of your search. Know when and how to narrow your search results to increase their relevance. This takes practice and experience to understand and execute. You may want to make a personal goal to try all levels of searches to see which are most relevant for the type of question or information you are seeking.

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### Conclusion

You may have questions or wonder how you can further acquire or strengthen your computer and internet skills. Here are two web pages that provide you with lists of resources you can use to help you learn more on your own **(optional)**:

* [DigitalLiteracy.gov](http://digitalliteracy.us/)
* [Cyndi’s List Internet Genealogy](https://www.cyndislist.com/internet-genealogy/)

## Optional Web Skills Study

The information below is **optional**but will be very useful in your genealogical work online. Explore this section when you are able.

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#### How to Share Links

Do you know how to copy and paste a web address into your web browser or share a URL with someone? If not, view the tutorial [How do I copy and paste a Web address into my Web Browser?](https://pc.net/helpcenter/answers/paste_web_address_into_browser)

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#### How to Deal with a Missing or Broken Link

One very important concept to understand when using the internet is to realize that the only thing constant about it is change, so get comfortable with change! Websites are constantly being updated, which means that a web address you used one month ago may not work the next month because the content was moved to a new page of the website.

Here is a real-life example:

* The location of the FamilySearch Wiki was moved to a new location on the FamilySearch website. The article "Abbreviation Table for Meyers Orts und Verkehrs Lexikon Des Deutschen Reichs" in the Wiki was once located at this URL: <https://www.familysearch.org/learn/wiki/en/Abbreviation_Table_for_Meyers>
  + But if you select the link, you will see an error message stating the page is not available. The page is not gone, it has just been moved.
  + The new location is <https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Abbreviation_Table_for_Meyers_Orts_und_Verkehrs_Lexikon_Des_Deutschen_Reichs>.

Notice the difference between the two URLs. The second URL did not contain “learn/” and added “\_Orts\_und\_Verkehrs\_Lexikon\_Des\_Deutschen\_Reiches.”

When you encounter a broken link in your personal research, try these techniques:

1. Using the web address, go to the homepage of the site (for example, go to “familysearch.org” in the example above). Follow the URL information chain (for example, once you get to the FamilySearch homepage, try to look for a link titled “Learn,” but if it is not available, look for a link titled “Wiki”).
   * You are using the information in the URL as “bread crumbs” to determine the new location of the item.
2. If you know the title of what you are looking for (for example, “Abbreviation Table for Meyers Orts und Verkehrs Lexikon Des Deutschen Reichs” on the FamilySearch website), open an internet browser search and type the title of the item (or a short form of the title) in quotation marks and then add the website name.
   * For example, you could go to [Google](https://www.google.com/), copy this phrase—“Abbreviation Table for Meyers” FamilySearch—and paste it into the Google search box. The article displays as the very first search result.
3. Use the [Internet Archive Wayback Machine](https://archive.org/web/). This site captures copies of webpages that have been moved or taken down.
   * Keep in mind that these are old “snapshots” of websites. New information will not be visible on these sites.
   * Copy the old URL into the search box and view the results on the calendar to see if a copy of the old page exists.
   * If there is a copy of the old webpage, use it to become familiar with the way the site is organized. This will help you to more easily find what you are looking for on the new version of the website.

#### Snip Tools or Print Screen Options

The Microsoft Snipping Tool is a valuable tool included in your Microsoft student package. You can use it to take pictures of a screen on a computer or laptop. This is valuable if you find a document you would like to save or share.  Be sure to include a citation for the image either on the image itself if you can edit the image, in the file name, or in a separate document so you can cite the information. You can search the internet to learn how to take screenshots on different devices.

1. Merriam Webster.com, s.v. “preservation,” accessed 21 October 2019, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/preservation.
2. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, “Preserving History Video Series,” (https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/system/error?lang=eng : accessed 1 September 2020; site inactive on 18 April 2023). Transcripts held by BYU-Idaho, FHGEN 110 W09 Study: Preservation.
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6. Wikipedia, “Family History Library,” Wikipedia (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_History_Library>: edited 18 February 2023, accessed 27 April 2023).

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