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Which Software?
by Barbara J Starmans

There are so many choices now when it comes to family history software. How do you know which one to buy? Since you will be spending a lot of your research time working with your genealogy software, it is important to find the program you like and that works best for you. While some programs have advanced features that seem to be intended for professional genealogists, other programs are designed to be easier for beginners to learn. Some programs shine in producing printed charts and reports while others are more oriented towards online researchers who prefer to store their research digitally.

Since most of the popular programs have a trial version, why not take a few for a spin before making your final decision?

RootsMagic

Over twenty years ago, Bruce Buzbee of FormalSoft wrote the popular 'Family Origins' genealogy software, originally sold under license by Parsons Technology. The rights to the Family Origins software changed hands several times, eventually being bought by Genealogy.com. Genealogy.com marketed the software for several years before discontinuing it in early 2003. In the meantime, using everything he had learned from writing Family Origins, Bruce Buzbee developed the first version of RootsMagic, releasing it in February 2002 and today, RootsMagic 6 is one of the most popular genealogy programs available for Windows.

System Requirements and Support

RootsMagic can run on Windows 8, 7, Vista, XP, and 2000 and can import data from several competitor products including Family Tree Maker (v 16 and earlier), PAF, Family Origins (v 4 and earlier), Legacy (v2 and earlier), a standard GEDCOM file or it can download your family from FamilySearch Family Tree. RootsMagic mobile viewer software is available for both iOS and android devices. Go to the RootsMagic website (www.rootsmagic.com) for free support options and links to online webinars and tutorials.

Features

RootsMagic has a wide range of charts and reports and supports linking photographs, documents and website references to your family history research. There are built in source templates that make it simple to cite your sources in the Evidence Explained citation format popularised by Elizabeth Shown Mills. One of the most unique features of RootsMagic is that a fully featured 'RootsMagic-to-go' version can be installed on a USB memory stick, letting you easily take your genealogy software and data with you anywhere. Any updates entered while using the USB stick can be effortlessly synchronized back into

your desktop or laptop database when you return home. Publish your family tree online at My.RootsMagic.com or create a shareable CD to send to your family members. RootsMagic is FamilySearch certified and is a great way to sync with FamilySearch Family Tree.

RootsMagic contains many built in reference tools including a live UK spell check, a thesaurus and a place gazetteer along with customisable toolbars and online web search providers. The RootsMagic single-file database can be backed up to your hard drive, to a CD or even directly to Dropbox.

When you first open RootsMagic, you can select from a pedigree view (adjustable to show either five or six generations), a family view, a descendant view (adjustable to show from two to seven generations), a fully customisable people list view, a web search view and one of the newest features, an customisable timeline view that shows events from not only an individual's life, but also from their parents, their siblings, their spouses and their children's lives.

RootsMagic comes with sixty predefined fact types or create your own customised facts to record even more information. Share any fact between multiple people in your database and assign customised roles to each participant. Use the to-do list and the research journal to track your next steps and your completed research. Protect the privacy of living family members on printed or exported reports by setting the options to exclude personal information based on the living flag, the private event flag, or even with private notes.

Pricing

Buy RootsMagic online (www.rootsmagic.co.uk) choosing from the following options:
- RootsMagic 6 UK Platinum Edition £49.95 (includes a subscription to TheGenealogist.co.uk)
- RootsMagic 6 UK Standard Edition £34.95
- RootsMagic 6 UK Basic Edition £19.95
- RootsMagic 6 UK Upgrade on CD £19.95 or download £18.40.

RootsMagic also offers a free version of their software RootsMagic Essentials that contains the core features of the paid software.

Family Tree Maker

Family Tree Maker version 1.0 was released in 1989 by Banner Blue software. From 1995 to 2003, the software was sold by Broderbund but since 2006, it has been taken over by Ancestry.com and is currently the only genealogy software that synchronises directly with Ancestry online trees. The program is available in various editions which include different levels of Ancestry memberships with the software.

System Requirements and Support

Family Tree Maker runs on Windows 8, 7, Vista and XP and a new Mac version is available for Mac OS X 10.6 or later, including OS X 10.9 Mavericks. If you have an existing tree created in another software package, Family Tree Maker can import your data directly from previous versions of Family Tree Maker back to version 5, from Personal Ancestral File (PAF), from Legacy Family Tree, the recently discontinued Master Genealogist, from a standard GEDCOM file, or you can download your Ancestry.co.uk online tree to get started. Support for Family Tree Maker is available through the software help menu, the online

help centre, online training tutorials or from the companion guide included with the software. The Ancestry mobile app is available for both iOS and android devices.

Features

Family Tree Maker has interactive street and satellite maps, offers the ability to add photos, documents, audio and video to your tree and has shareable family trees using the included templates. Get hints from the infamous shaky green leaves, use the included simplified source citations, standardised location names and customisable reporting and navigation to capture your family history. The latest features include the new family view, new tools for sharing and collaborating, more organizational tools, an expanded index of individuals report, and a new tree branch export that makes it easier to export just one branch of your tree.

Program views include tree and person views, places, media, sources and web search and screens can be customised or resized according to your preferences. Choose from the many standardised reports including charts, ahnentafel reports, descendant reports, person reports, and specialised reports about relationships, places, media and sources or customise Family Tree Maker's Smart Story report to tell the story of your ancestors. There are many pre-defined fact types ready to use or create customised individual or shared facts. Track your research by adding general or person related tasks to the plan view and keep your research on track with due dates and custom categories. Family Tree Maker offers several privacy options to keep the data of living people private. Choose to privatise your file before creating reports or exports to remove first names and facts from all living persons. Ensure your data is safe by backing up your database to removable media or your hard drive. Your backup can also be configured to include your media files, historical events and web favourites.

Pricing

Buy Family Tree Maker from the Shop at www.ancestry.co.uk:
- Family Tree Maker for Mac V3 £59.99 (includes 6-month Ancestry.co.uk™ Premium Membership)
- Family Tree Maker Platinum 2014 £59.99 (includes 6-month Ancestry.co.uk™ Premium Membership)
- Family Tree Maker Deluxe 2014 £39.99 (includes 3 Month Essentials Membership to Ancestry.co.uk™)
- Family Tree Maker World 2014 £99.99 (includes 6 Months Worldwide Membership to Ancestry.co.uk™)
- Family Tree Maker 2014 upgrade £19.99 (includes 30 Day Essentials Membership to Ancestry.co.uk™)

Family Historian

Family Historian was designed and written by Calico Pie Limited and version 2.0 was released for sale in 2004. The latest version 5.0 was released in early 2012. It was designed to be 100% compatible with the GEDCOM file format from other programs and natively saves all data to a standard GEDCOM file.

In addition to the program's own rich feature set, users of the Family Historian software also have access to many user written queries and to the Family Historian Plugin Store. Use a plugin to find and

search for missing census facts or to run a search and replace utility on any text, age or date values in your data.

System Requirements and Support

Family Historian can run on both the 32-bit and 64-bit versions of Windows 8 and well as Windows 7, Vista and XP. New users of the Family Historian software can import from any GEDCOM file from any software with excellent results. For support on Family Historian, refer to the included Quick Start Guide booklet or use the complete PDF version of the book "Getting the Most from Family Historian 5" installed with the program.

Features

Family Historian has several views to let you look at your data including spouses and children view, parents and siblings view, ancestors view, descendants view, individual view and Smart Tree view and the screen layout and program options are fully customisable. Choose from many standard reports including charts, individual reports, family group sheets, narrative and outline reports or design your own queries and use powerful scripting tools to explore your data. Hide, show, move, resize or re-order boxes on your chart view layouts for a custom pedigree view. Search genealogy websites such as Ancestry, Find My Past, FreeBMD or Rootsweb directly from Family Historian using the integrated search tool.

Family Historian comes with a large number of pre-defined fact types or create your own customised events. In addition to facts, Family Historian also has quite a number of standard attributes that can be assigned to your ancestors such as religion, description and education or add your own custom attributes. Photographs and documents can be added and linked to a person or persons. For photographs of groups of people, each face can be linked to an individual person in the database. The photographs can be displayed in diagrams, on reports, on CDs, DVDs and web pages. Reports in Family Historian have customisable options to omit references to persons flagged as private, show only basic details for living individuals or to hide photographs for private or living persons.

To keep your data safe, you can choose to back up your GEDCOM file only, your project file and data subfolder or your entire project folder and save all your research to your hard drive, a USB stick or Dropbox.

Pricing

Buy Family Historian online or from popular resellers.
- Family Historian 5 download £29.99
- Family Historian 5 upgrade download £19.16.

Discounts available when buying multiple copies.
Boxed version is available from resellers only
- My History, S&N Genealogy, TWR Computing, and Gould Genealogy.

Family Historian also offers a thirty day, limited trial version.

Legacy 8.0

Written by Ken McGinnis and Dave Berdan of Millennium Software, Legacy was first released in June of 1997 and has been growing in features and popularity ever since. The latest version 8.0, was released in November of 2013 and contains many new and innovative features including a chronology view, FamilySearch integration, shared events and origins and migration reporting.

System Requirements and Support

Legacy runs on both old and new versions of Windows ranging from both the 32-bit and 64-bit versions of Windows 8 all the way back to Windows 98. New users can import existing family tree data into Legacy from Personal Ancestral File (PAF) versions 2.31, 3, 4 or 5 or from Ancestral Quest versions 2.x or 3.x. Alternatively, data can also be imported from any GEDCOM file or downloaded from FamilySearch Family Tree. Legacy has an extensive help menu including a link to an online Beginners Video or visit the Legacy Family Tree Webinar website (www.familytreewebinars.com) for a selection of upcoming webinars on both the Legacy software and on general genealogy research and over 263 hours archived training videos. Legacy has a mobile app available for both iOS and android devices.

Features

In the main screen, select the Legacy home tab to view your tree statistics, research reminders and the latest news from Legacy or look at your ancestors on the family view tab, the pedigree view tab, the descendant view tab, the chronology view tab or browse and search for individuals in Legacy's index view tab. Customise Legacy to suit your needs whether you want to change the appearance of your screen, decide which view to display or specify how names are printed or any of the other many optional settings in the 'Customise' screen. Use Legacy's SourceWriter^{TM} to prepare properly formatted source citations and then use the source clipboard feature to easily copy sources to other pieces of information. Print charts and reports about your ancestors including the standard pedigree charts, family group sheets or publish an ancestor book or a descendant book. Print blank reports and forms including census forms, questionnaires and research logs. Create customised wall charts with the Chart Creation Wizard and either print them directly or order printed charts directly from Legacy's US based printer.

Link unlimited documents, photographs or sound files to anyone in your database or map the important locations in your family using Microsoft Bing maps. Create webpages ready to publish on the internet or easily search many websites using Legacy's built in search feature. Legacy also links directly with FamilySearch's family tree. Search for duplicates, merge individuals, and upload source information or share information from your ancestors' lives with Family Tree right from your Legacy database.

Pricing

Purchase Legacy 8.0 at www.legacyfamilytree.com in one of these versions:
- Legacy 8.0 Deluxe Bundle (software on CD & download, printed & PDF manual and training CDs volume 1) $59.95 USD (about £36)
- Legacy 8.0 Deluxe (software on CD & download, printed & PDF manual) $39.95 USD (about £24)
- Legacy 8.0 Deluxe Download Bundle (software via download, PDF manual) $34.95 USD (about £21)
- Legacy 8.0 Deluxe (software via download) $29.95 USD (about £18)

Or download Legacy 8.0 Standard Edition with many of the core features of the deluxe version free of charge.

Family Tree Builder

Family Tree Builder is a windows desktop program available for download from MyHeritage.com. It is specifically designed to synchronise with a family site on MyHeritage, although it can be used in stand-alone mode as well. The latest release is Family Tree Builder 7.0, released in May 2014 and with support for forty different languages, Family Tree Builder has been downloaded more than forty million times.

System Requirements and Support

Family Tree Builder 7.0 is designed for Windows, although a Mac version may be coming soon. Support for the program is available through the help menu in the form of a downloadable PDF manual. MyHeritage has a mobile app available for both iOS and android devices.

Features

The start-up wizard guides you through the initial configuration of the program. During the installation the user is prompted to purchase the premium version of the program that includes merging of Smart Matches, All-in-One charts and full map support along with an upgraded family site on MyHeritage.com, however the upgrade is optional. Data can be imported from a MyHeritage online tree or it can be imported from any GEDCOM file.

Privacy features are available in Family Tree Builder from the tools menu. People, facts and notes can be privatised and set not to sync with the online family site or hidden on reports and charts. The desktop version has standard reports like pedigree charts, family group sheets, ancestor or descendant reports and a timeline report. A mapping feature shows all the places that your family lived.

Pricing

Family Tree Builder is a free download but to get the most out of the software, a premium online account is required.
- Premium membership is £4.50 per month over a one year period.