



## SAMPLE GUIDE D: GENEALOGICAL METHODOLOGY GUIDE

### What is Genealogy?

Genealogy is a research field concerned primarily with accurately reconstructing forgotten or unknown identities and relationships. Many of these identities and relationships existed in the past, but genealogical research also includes living people. Genealogy emphasizes biological and marital kinships, but it also addresses adoptive, extramarital, and other kinds of relationships within and across generations. As a research discipline, genealogy has its own skill set and standards. Like mathematics, genealogy is a problem-solving discipline in its own right and one that supports other fields, including history and anthropology.

### The Research Analysis Model

SOURCES →	INFORMATION →	EVIDENCE
Original	Primary	Direct
Derivative	Secondary	Indirect

*Sources provide information from which we select evidence for analysis.*

**SOURCES** are: people, documents, publications (all media), artifacts, etc. Their form is *original* or *derivative* and considered tangible (can be seen, touched or heard).

- An *original* record is made at the time of the event or soon after. [i.e. an original birth certificate]
- Official “record copies” made by civil and clerical authorities are *derivatives* but are considered “best evidence” when the originals are not available. [i.e. a certified birth certificate]
- Image copies are *derivatives* but are acceptable evidence when originals are not available. [i.e. a photocopy of a birth certificate]

**INFORMATION** is: the precise statement(s) made by these sources, written or oral. Their form is either *primary* (firsthand) or *secondary* (secondhand) and considered tangible (can be seen, touched or heard).

- Information’s quality cannot be determined unless we identify the informants and the nature of their involvement with the events or issues they discuss.
- The quality of information must also be judged by such factors as the amount of time that has elapsed since the event occurred, the mental condition of the informant, and the possibility of personal bias in the matter at hand.

**EVIDENCE** is: information that is relevant to our research question.

- Its form is *direct*: meaning that it explicitly states and answer to our question.
- Or *indirect*: meaning that it does not explicitly state an answer but can be combined with other information from elsewhere to build a case.

### The Proof Principle

“Proof” is not a source or citation. It is a body of evidence accumulated to satisfy reasonable likelihood that each and every statement is reliable. The burden of proof rests with the petitioning group.