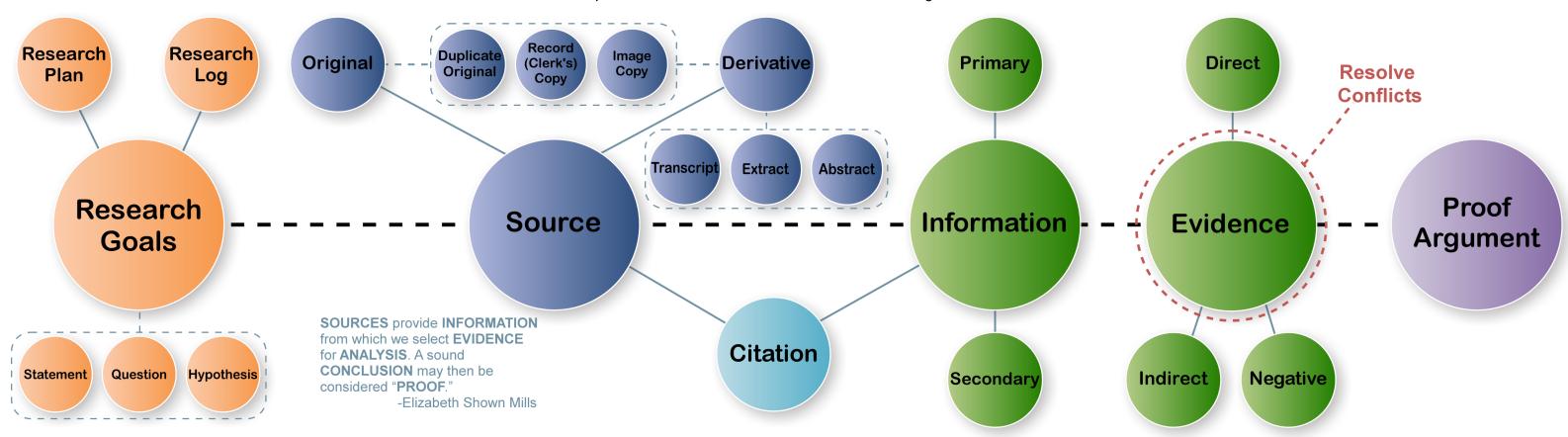
Genealogy Research Process

Visualization of Concepts from The Board for Certification of Genealogists & Elizabeth Shown Mills



The Genealogical Proof Standard (GPS)



We identify our objectives:

- statement to prove
- question to answer
- hypothesis to test

A Research Plan identifies where we will search. A Research Log keeps us focused on what we are trying to discover and tracks the progress of our investigation.



We conduct a reasonably exhaustive search in reliable sources for all information that is or may be pertinent to the identity, relationship, event, or situation in question.

As part of data collection we use: Images:

Photocopy, digital image, etc. Handwritten or typed copies: Transcript - full, exact copy **Extract** - partial, exact copy **Abstract** - condensed version with all important details

Source provenance is the tracking of each representation of a source back to the original.



We collect and include in our compilation a complete. accurate citation to the source or sources of each item of information we use.

The **definitive guide** is:

Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace by Elizabeth Shown Mills.

Citing sources gives credibility to our research, helps us have **confidence** in the research of others, and aids during analysis.

Sources:

Board for Certification of Genealogists. The BCG Genealogical Standards Manual. Orem, Utah: Ancestry Publishing, 2000. Mills, Elizabeth Shown. Evidence Explained: Citing History Sources from Artifacts to Cyberspace. Baltimore: Genealogical

Publishing Co., 2007

Mills, Elizabeth Shown. Evidence Analysis: A Research Process Map. Washington, DC: Board for Certification of Genealogists, 2006 Mills, Elizabeth Shown. Evidence! Citation & Analysis for the Family Historian. Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1997.

Analyze Sources, Information & Evidence

We analyze and **correlate** the collected information to assess its quality as evidence.

Source - an artifact, document, book, person, etc. Original - first oral or recorded form **Derivative** - from that already written or spoken

Derivatives that might be treated as Originals: **Duplicate Original** - made at same time as original Image Copy - film, photo, digital copy of original Record (Clerk's) Copy - usually entered in a register

Information - data that makes up a source **Primary** - firsthand (participant, eyewitness) **Secondary** - secondhand (non-participant)

Evidence - our interpretation of relevant information **Direct** - answers the research question by itself Indirect - relevant, but can't stand alone Negative - inference drawn from absence of information that should exist in a record but is missing

Resolve **Conflicts**

We resolve any conflicts caused by items of evidence that contradict each other or are contrary to a proposed (hypothetical) solution to the question.

All conflicts *must* be resolved.

Although not always the case, usually:

- Original sources carry more weight than derivatives.
- Primary information carries more weight than secondary.
- Indirect evidence can carry just as much or more weight than direct.

Even primary information from an original source can be wrong

Conclude **Written Proof**

We arrive at a **soundly** reasoned, coherently written conclusion.

In a **proof argument** you:

- Explain the problem
- Identify the known resources
- Present the evidence with source citations and analysis
- Discuss any conflicting evidence
- Summarize the main points and write your conclusion

There is no such thing as a final conclusion. New information can support, question, or disprove your current conclusion.

© Copyright 2008, Mark Tucker