

FREE Non-Genealogy Based Smart Phone Apps for Smart Genealogists

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Note: Links and information here were current as of January 2018

To view the most updated handout information for the presentation about Free Smart Phone Apps, go to the above URL and click on Living Legacy Project. Scroll down (link is in orange).

Or go directly to

<http://tinyurl.com/butchsmartphone>

We are looking at FREE apps here, many of which have pay versions. The pay versions (which can be as little as \$1 – one-time fee) sometimes offer additional options (bells & whistles) and generally do not come with annoying ads. FREE apps almost always come with advertisements (usually PG rated, but sometimes annoying if you are trying to work on something and keep getting a pop-up or scrolling advertisement).

In brief, smart phone apps can do the following for your genealogy:

- Save it and organize it by using the cloud (many have unlimited or extended options for a fee – annual or one-time)
 - <https://evernote.com/>
 - <https://www.onenote.com/>
 - <https://trello.com/>
 - <https://www.dropbox.com>
 - <https://www.google.com/drive/>
 - <https://onedrive.live.com>
 - <https://cogi.com> (audio, with last moments saved, in case)
 - <https://photos.google.com/>
 - <https://www.amazon.com/clouddrive/home>
- Record it
 - <https://evernote.com/>
 - <https://www.onenote.com/>
 - <https://writeapp.me/> (various options for recording, writing, and sharing)
 - <https://cogi.com> (audio, with last moments saved, in case)

- Track it/Map it/Find it (just a sample here)
 - <https://www.google.com/mobile/maps/>
 - <http://mobile.mapquest.com/mobile/>
 - <https://www.mapmytracks.com/>
 - <https://track-kit.net/>
 - <https://runkeeper.com/apps>
 - <http://www.mapmywalk.com/app/>
 - My Tracks (check Google Play – for Android)
- See it!
 - Check for magnifiers on your mobile device
 - Check for telescope apps on your mobile device
- Scan it/photograph it
 - <https://www.camscanner.com/>
 - Fast Scanner – check on Google Play
 - Office Lens – check on Google Play
- Keep your family close
 - RootsMagic: <http://rootsmagic.com> (smart phone app via DropBox)
 - Families 2.0 – Legacy for Android (find on Google Play - \$\$)
- Learn it!
 - <https://Dictionary.com> (comes with Thesaurus.com)
 - Translators (as applicable)
 - Google Translate for mobile (see Google Play)
- Check before you go
 - <https://weatherbug.com/>
 - Local apps for the places you are visiting (e.g., coming to California? Download the CalTrans app from Google Play)
 - Conference apps
 - Street/highway updates for area you are visiting
- Light it up (in library, cemetery, or ???)
 - Check for flashlight apps

Apps are not the same thing as Widgets. Widgets are “bits of self-contained code that display a program . . . [often] a shortcut to a larger application,” according to <https://www.androidcentral.com/what-is-a-widget> (yeah, right). For more information, check the link. (I use a widget for my date/time information on my phone.)

smart phones, like computers, are vulnerable – be certain to get virus protection (there are many free options for that, too)

SOME TIPS FOR SELECTING A SMART PHONE

- Know what you want to do with it BEFORE buying and especially before signing a contract
- Remember that closet or cupboard you never thought you’d fill but now you can’t find anything in it, or the suitcase that should have plenty of room for any trip you’d ever want to take?
 - Smart phone memory is better than our own – it is hungry for more and holds onto all the information
 - Smart phones have different memory options
 - Cloud storage (see apps above)
 - “SM” (SmartMedia) card storage
 - Hard drive storage

16 GB sounds like a lot of storage, but photos and videos take an amazing amount of space (the reason for the cloud storage apps) . . . SO

- Select a phone that allows for additional storage (will take a SM card – they range from 2MB to 128 MB . . . go large)
- Set up your phone with a cloud storage app so, if necessary, you can “dump” data from the phone, knowing it is safe in your backup (Note: verify that the transfer worked before dumping data)
- Back up your smart phone data via a cloud app (Evernote, OneNote, something) as well as your personal computer (some flash drives are like transformers: they can save something from your phone through the power port, then plug into your laptop with a USB plug on the same apparatus, allowing easy backups if you don’t wish to use the cloud or want to have just one more assurance nothing is lost)

Smart phones only work when charged. Check your battery usage (there are various apps that will prolong battery use, but they aren’t miracle-workers). . . SO

- Buy a phone that allows you to change out the battery (and have a second one, charged, on hand – if you can do that; be sure to get the battery charger that plugs into AC to have it ready to go):
 - Be certain whatever battery and charger you purchase are for your phone’s SPECIFIC make and model (check on Amazon or other on-line suppliers; they are cheaper than the cell-phone store and work just as well)

However, most phones do not have that option so . . .

- Get a separate, portable phone charger (and keep it charged) for those emergencies when your battery goes bad or loses needed power (ideally one that can be recharged with the phone attached)
 - These can be purchased from Amazon or other on-line merchants (again, cheaper than what you can buy from the phone store or other brick & mortar supplier)
 - These are often universal (i.e., what works on one phone will work on another: Androids frequently use the same cables; iPhones use the same cable connection); know what your phone uses (especially before going on a genealogy junket!)
 - Get spare cables/cords – the tiny wires break and if you have just one cord, you may find yourself out of juice (there is no such thing as an unbreakable cable, in spite of the advertising to the contrary)
 - If you drive a lot, get a separate charger for your car (newer cars are coming equipped with USB ports for charging; some of these charge phones faster than a standard charge cable connected to an electrical outlet; but don’t expect it to charge if the car is not running)
 - Consider the non-connected charger options (lay phone on the device to charge it; however, the charger pad either has to be plugged in or needs solar power . . . also, not every pad works with every phone – a blue tooth option or connector that is attached to the battery itself may be required; if you can’t open the battery compartment, the latter device is useless)

Understand that different phones – iPhones and even some Androids – use different charging cord connectors. If you get an iPhone, you will need a different plug-in cord than if you have an Android, PLUS new Androids are now coming out with new connectors (as of 2016) so if you get a new phone, you may also need new cords, chargers, ???

DISPOSAL

- Get rid of broken cords immediately when you realize the cord is damaged (it will not repair itself and they are so inexpensive, they aren't worth repairing) . . . keeping a broken cord risks you grabbing it, thinking it will be good, only to find (when you need it most) that it's a dud
- Old phones should be wiped of all data before disposal (your cell phone provider should be able to help with this), then
 - Take to a proper disposal location – Best Buy has a bin for old phones
 - Donate to a project – <https://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com/> ; they will take and recondition phones for use by soldiers and vets
 - Sell it on-line
 - <https://www.gazelle.com/> will buy used and even cracked or broken phones . . . you won't get rich, but you might be able to buy a cup of coffee – not a latte, though
 - Sell on Craig's List, eBay, or even Amazon, but read all the specs for sellers – you might find the hassle is not worth the time and effort

Cell phones (smart or dumb) are considered “Electronic Waste” and most Hazardous Waste collection points will refuse them; Electronic collection drives will usually take them. But they should NEVER be thrown in the regular trash!

Smart phones often still have usable operations even when the phone is no longer adequate – we use one like an MP3 player since it already has our music on it. It also has a gallery of our ancestor photos so we don't use up space on the “good” smart phone with those things we still want to keep . . . and all can still be transferred to a computer, plugging it in like a flash drive, or even over the Internet (that is still active, even if the phone number is no longer applicable).

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Smart phones are only as smart as the user. Know what your phone will (and will not) do before you need to use the desired function. Try out the apps and remove the ones that are not effective for you (apps use up space – I usually install the app for the MLB during the playoffs every fall, then remove it after the World Series – most are easy to install and uninstall).

Smart phones come equipped with cameras. Remember that some archives and courthouses forbid the use (and, therefore, the admittance) of cameras and you might be asked to leave your phone in a locker or your car. Check in advance so that you don't go to research and have all the necessary data locked up where you can't utilize the functions for which you purchased the phone.