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# NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY®

## **Guidelines for Use of Computer Technology in Genealogical Research**

### **Recommended by the National Genealogical Society**

Mindful that computers are tools, genealogists and family historians

- accept that computer technology has not changed the principles of genealogical research, only some of the procedures;
- learn the capabilities and limits of their computing equipment and software;
- do not accept uncritically the ability of software to format, number, import, modify, check, chart or report their data, and therefore carefully evaluate any resulting product;
- treat compiled sources examined on-line in the same way as other compiled sources, being aware of their potential weaknesses as well as their usefulness as guides to original sources;
- accept digital images or enhancements of an original record as a satisfactory substitute for the original only when there is reasonable assurance that the image accurately reproduces the unaltered original;
- cite sources for data obtained on-line or from digital media with the same care that is appropriate for sources on paper and other media, and enter data into a digital database only when its source can remain associated with it;
- always cite the sources for information or data posted on-line or sent to others, naming the author of a digital file as its immediate source, while crediting original sources cited within the file;
- preserve the integrity of their own databases by evaluating the reliability of downloaded data before incorporating it into their own files;
- include, whenever sharing digital data they have altered, a description of the alteration; and

- treat people on-line as courteously and civilly as they would treat them face-to-face.

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