

Gadgets for the Traveling Genealogist – Resources

1. **Internet Service** for travelers:
 - a. “MiFi” – Mobile Hotspot devices use a cellular data-service to provide WiFi link. (Google-search: “mobile hotspot”)
 - i. Verizon Wireless – 4G LTE Mobile Hotspot MiFi™ 4510L (\$50, after MIR, with a two-year data-plan, and monthly data-service charges)
<http://www.verizonwireless.com>
 - ii. AT&T’s MiFi 2372 – (\$50 after MIR, with new two-year contract for data-plan service). 3G-4G service is available.
 - iii. Sprint-Nextel: Overdrive™ 3G/4G Mobile Hotspot by Sierra Wireless (\$50 after MIR, with new two-year contract for data-plan service). 3G-4G service is available.
 - b. Use your own “Smart-Phone” – turn it into a WiFi “hotspot” for your computer’s needs. Check with your cell-phone carrier about your options, since you already may have enough “hardware” for that service on your phone. Usually available on a month-by-month basis as an option, and cost depends on volume of data transferred. (Verizon’s plan costs \$20/month for about 2GB of data.)
 - c. Public WiFi hot-spots are abundant, but be very careful about entering passwords or checking your on-line banking, since data-theft / capture in public hotspots (coffee shops, etc.) is notoriously easy.
2. **Netbooks** (small, lightweight portable computers – \$250–\$500.)
 - a. CNET says (March 2011): “Whether you call them Netbooks, mini laptops, or subnotebooks, these small, low-cost, low-power systems are the hottest thing to hit laptops since the touch pad. We suggest at a minimum an Intel Atom N450 CPU, 1GB of RAM, a 160GB or larger hard drive, and Windows 7 Starter Edition, with Bluetooth as a preferred option for tethering a smartphone for mobile broadband access. Higher-end options are becoming more prevalent, with 11.6-inch displays, higher screen resolutions, and new graphics hardware, such as Nvidia’s Ion GPU, helping Netbook prices move out of the \$299-\$399 range.”
 - b. Asus Eee PC 1018PB-BK801 (\$350)
 - c. HP Mini 210-1199DX (\$370, and pink!) [... and many, many more.]
3. **e-Book readers**
 - a. Amazon Kindle (\$79--139 for e-ink, WiFi-only version) CNET says: “Slimmer, more compact design than previous Kindle; improved screen with higher contrast and faster page turns; native PDF support; large library of hundreds of thousands of e-books, newspapers, magazines, and blogs via Amazon’s familiar

online store; built-in free 3G wireless "Whispernet" data network, plus Wi-Fi; built-in keyboard for notes; with 4GB (3.3 usable) of internal memory, it's capable of storing 3,500 electronic books; eight fonts available, including two new extra-large sizes; excellent battery life; displays image files, and plays MP3 and AAC audio."

- b. Barnes & Noble's *Color Nook* – (\$250) CNET says: "Color e-book reader with vibrant 7-inch touch screen; zippy performance; built-in Wi-Fi; Barnes & Noble Nookbook store; 8GB onboard memory, plus microSD expansion slot; built-in Web browser works well; supports PDF, Word, and ePub files; displays images and some video formats; support for audio and MP3 playback."
- c. e-Book **conversion Software** to consider:
 - i. *Calibre* (free) – by Kovid Goyal A utility for working with ebooks including file transfer to the SONY Reader, Nook, Kindle and many, other reading devices. Uses Python. For Windows/Linux/OSX. Can convert HTML, TXT, RTF, LIT and PDF files to LRF and all other popular e-book formats, such as epub, lit, fb2, mobi, rtf, txt, pdb and others. Also has utilities to download pages from websites and automatically convert them to e-book formats.
 - ii. See: http://wiki.mobileread.com/wiki/E-book_conversion#Windows
 - iii. [http://wiki.mobileread.com/wiki/HowTo: Create an eBook](http://wiki.mobileread.com/wiki/HowTo:_Create_an_eBook)
 - iv. I recommend saving your family research-file into an HTML-file, before it's converted to e-book format, so that you preserve the hot-links of your Table of Contents, etc. PDF-files are viewable mostly as a static image, and you may need to scroll around the page to find the information you're seeking.

4. GPS-Receivers

- a. Automotive-types – the largest manufacturers are Garmin, TomTom, Magellan, and Delorme. These will typically have built-in batteries sufficient for a few hours of work when not plugged in, so may be used "in the field." This type of receiver provides turn-by-turn directions to any destination you select (type in), or to "points of interest" in its built-in database (*e.g.*, motels, restaurants, hospitals, shopping or entertainment attractions).
 - i. Garmin nüvi 2350LMT (\$230.) – PC Magazine's Editor's Choice.
 - ii. Garmin nüvi 3790T (\$450.) – Consumer Reports top pick.

- b. Hand-held devices – also from Garmin, Magellan, and Delorme. These may be complicated to operate. Unlike the automotive types, they are designed to use “way-points” along your route to help you find your way back to the starting location, and may also contain “points of interest.”
 - i. High-end: Garmin Oregon 200 (\$300), and 400 (\$440) series models, and with its touch-screen interface is probably one of the best now. Its batteries are designed to last up to 16 hours before needing to be charged. The Oregon combines rugged outdoor touchscreen navigation, and is a high-sensitivity GPS, barometric altimeter, 3-axis electronic compass. Some models also share data with other similar devices (i.e., your location), and include turn-by-turn auto routing.
 - ii. Magellan's eXplorist series (\$200–\$550), it is ruggedized and waterproof, and designed specifically for outdoor use. It has a 2.2-inch transfective LCD screen, GPS accuracy up to 3-5 meters, and the ability to save routes, destinations, and tracks.

5. **Inexpensive Gadgets and Accessories** – on-line sources:

- a. Meritline.com
- b. OnSale.com
- c. Buy.com
- d. Amazon.com
- e. NewEgg.com

6. **Digital Voice Recorder** for preserving your notes – these use “RAM” (computer-type memory chips) to hold your data, rather than tape, so there are no moving parts to wear out or maintain, and even the lowest-capacity recorders can preserve many, many hours of speech. Great for capturing interviews with the elders! Save data-files to your computer as .WAV-files.

- a. Olympus DP 10 – (1 GB capacity; \$30.)
- b. Sony ICD BX800 – (2 GB capacity; \$40.; uses 2 AA batteries)

7. **Digital Cameras** – Great for photos of relatives or tombstones or former residences. Also may be used to photograph pages in books of interest, in place of a page-scanner, where permitted. My preference is for a “pocketable” size, rather than D-SLR or super-zoom size, just for convenience and portability.

- a. *DPReview.com/Reviews* – provides in-depth (exhaustive, if not exhausting) reviews of most digital cameras for photography professionals and advanced amateurs, but very informative.
- b. Canon PowerShot S100 – 12 MP, 24-120mm equivalent 5x zoom, with optical image stabilization system, F2.0-5.9, built-in neutral density filter, ISO 80-6400.

- c. Olympus PEN Lite/E-PL3 – 12 MP.
- d. Ricoh PX – Image stabilized 16MP, Waterproof to 3m, Shockproof to 1.5m.
- e. Nikon P300 – ISO 160-3200 at full 12MP resolution, with a 1080p High Definition video mode, and an optically stabilized 24-100mm lens.

8. **Topographical Maps** – (free download from USGS)

- a. Go to: <http://store.usgs.gov>
- b. Upper-left corner – select, “Map Locator and Downloader”
- c. Enter a search-term, such as a town, or river or mountain-top – a place on a map with a searchable name; press <Enter>.
- d. Indicate whether the location for which you’re searching is an “Address or Place” or “USGS Map Name” in the drop-down box below the search-window.
- e. Click on a location in the on-line map, to affix the red pointer.
- f. Click on the red pointer, to see a list of the Topo-Maps for that area, by size, level of detail (7.5-minute is higher-resolution than 15-minute), and year of origin.
- g. Download the map which interests you – these are huge files, and will take a while to download.
- h. View in *Adobe Acrobat Reader*. Zoom-in on the features of interest (+ / - button).
- i. Print the portions in which you’re interested, from Acrobat’s Print-menu, by selecting “Print Current View,” and Page-scaling: “Fit to Printable Area.”

9. Print “**Business-Cards**” for your travels to leave with relatives, contacts, and as book-marks in books where you’ve found your ancestors discussed.

- a. Staples / Avery – \$17-26 per box of sheets, and print at home on your computer and printer, which make about 250 Cards.
- b. Include your name, street and email addresses, and phone-numbers.
- c. Also include your Ancestor-Names and Places for which you’re searching, specific to the locale you intend to visit!

10. **Thumb-Drives** – These USB-devices attach to your computer and provide a back-up location for your data-files (genealogy, text, photos, etc.) while you’re traveling.

- a. Add a TXT-file (use Windows’ *Notebook* to create) with your contact-info.
- b. Be sure to drop your data-files into Folders, rather than just “shoe-box” the files in the “root-directory” of the thumb-drive, so that it doesn’t reach its number-limit too soon.
- c. Don’t forget to “Empty the Trash” on/from your thumb-drive, to restore its capacity from time to time, to completely remove files deleted from it.
- d. Always use the Task-bar’s “Safely Remove Hardware” icon (lower right corner), before pulling out the thumb-drive.

11. **Security-Cable** for Laptop Computers (not available for *iPad* or other Tablets, yet)
 - a. Using a laptop security cable just may be one of the easiest methods of laptop security and protecting against theft. Laptop security cables can be and should be used in any location where you may have to leave your laptop such as your hotel room or co-worker's office. Never leave a laptop, even when secured, in an unlocked room. You can even use the laptop security cable to attach your notebook to your laptop case for additional security. This is one mobile accessory to never forget.
 - b. Targus DEFCON Combination Laptop Cable Lock (\$35.)
 - c. Kensington Microsaver Keyed Notebook Lock Security cable lock (\$22 online)

12. **Personal Labeler** – making sure your Stuff has an owner.
 - a. Personal Label-maker is an affordable investment that will help you easily identify your items, save you time and add creativity to your organizing projects. The only drawback is the sudden compulsion to label everything!
 - b. Items with internal batteries (cell-phones, etc.) – hide a label under battery, or on the inside cover, too.
 - c. Use your *Google VOICE*-phone number on the label, instead of your home phone-number, for security while traveling.
 - d. Be sure to label all your chargers to identify the device for which they're used.
 - e. Brother P-Touch PT-90 Label Maker (\$30.)
 - f. Dymo LetraTag Plus LT-100H Personal Label Maker (\$25.)

13. **Other (Lower-Tech) Items to Take With You:**
 - a. Mechanical Pencil
 - b. Spiral Notebook
 - c. Magnifying Glass (such as a *Magna-Brite*)
 - d. Extension Cords
 - e. Electrical Adapters, for foreign travel (Cars are still usually 12-volts though)
 - f. Chargers for Batteries / Devices
 - g. Sheets of Aluminum Foil (for reflective light on tomb-stones)
 - h. Colored Chalk for grave-markers, and a soft brush to remove it.
 - i. Rental Cell-phone (pre-paid plans) for foreign travel, to avoid "roaming" charges
 - j. Memory-card Readers – for USB-ports, to capture your scans and photos