

A Foundational Step in Research Strategy – What is the Research Question?

Emily Coffman Richardson

Kinsearchers@gmail.com

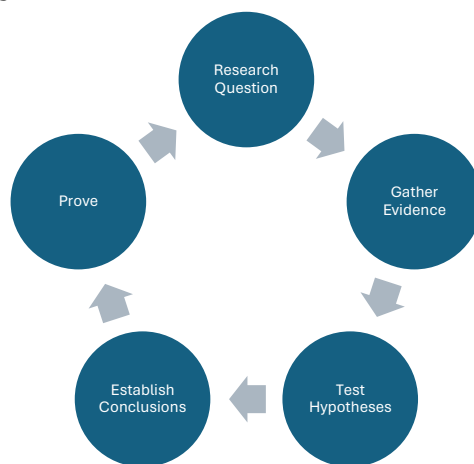
All Research Must take into consideration the GPS:

- Genealogical Proof Standard
 - Thorough Reasonably Exhaustive Research
 - Complete and Accurate Citations
 - Process of Analysis and Correlation
 - Resolution of Conflicts
 - Written Statement Supporting the Answer¹

Reasonably Exhaustive Research

- a. Yield at least two sources of *independent information* items agreeing directly or indirectly on a *research question's* answer;
- b. **Cover *sources* competent genealogists would examine to answer the same *research question*;**
- c. Provide at least some *primary information* and *direct, indirect or negative evidence* from at least one original record;
- d. **Replace where possible, relevant *authored narratives, derivative records, and information* that is secondary or undetermined, and**
- e. Yield, where possible data that indexes and databased identity as potentially relevant.²

The Research Process



¹ Board of Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, Second Edition (Nashville, TN, 2019), P. 1-2

² Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, Second Edition (Nashville, TN, 2019), page 85.

Effective Research Questions

- Identity
- Relationships
- Events
- Situations
- Broad to be answerable
- Relevant places and times
- Clearly Described unique person group or event
- Specification of unknown or forgotten information to discover

Identify what you know

- Consider using a timeline
- Review the current information – the clue might be there
- Typical questions include:
 - Identify parents
 - Separate 2 men of same name
 - Maiden name of married woman
 - Proposed military service

Three Basic Types of Questions

- When and Where did an event happen in an individual's life?
- To whom was an individual related to by marriage or genetically?
- What biographical details can be found about an ancestor?

Examples of Well-Crafted Questions

- Did Aaron Reed (1828-1891) who was born in Ohio, and died in Nesoho, Kansas in 1891 , leave a will naming his heirs and the distribution of his real and personal property?
- **Who are the parents of Henry Fox, born about 1814, married to Lydia Ann Milbourn in 1840, and who died on 25 July 1854 and is buried in Columbiana County, Ohio?**
- Did Martin Hess (died prior to 1880), listed as the husband of Eliza Davis (1842-1915) on multiple documents (who lived in Fayette County, PA) in relation to two sons (Waitman and William), serve in the Civil War? When and where did Martin Hess die?
- *Is Jacob Crum (1763-1814) who supposedly served in the Revolutionary War in Virginia and lived in Kentucky after the war, the father of Peter Joseph Crum, (1804-1880)?*

Practice writing your own research question below

- Who is the subject?
- Location
- Dates
- Purpose of research
- Does it distinguish one from another by the same name?