

About the committee WHO WE ARE

Records Preservation & Access Committee

A joint committee of...

Federation of Genealogical Societies

www.fgs.org

Nearly 600 member societies representing over 1,000,000 individual genealogists

National Genealogical Society

www.ngsgenealogy.org

More than 9,750 individual members and over 675 member societies and libraries representing more than 300,000 members or library patrons

Association of Professional Genealogists

www.apgen.org

Representing over 1,800 professional genealogists

Board for Certification of Genealogists

www.bcgcertification.org

Representing over 300 board-certified genealogists

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies

www.iajgs.org

75 member organizations representing 10,000 individuals

You can make a difference!

www.fgs.org/rpac

Addressing THE FACTS

Family history research is the fastest growing leisure activity in the United States.

78% of the U.S. population is interested in or actively researching their family history.

Source: zOmnibus Survey, Market Tools, February 2007

The Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, the largest genealogical library in the United States, has approximately **567,000 visitors** each year and in 2006 estimated approximately **6 million** people visit its local Family History Centers across the United States each year.

Facts about FamilySearch.org, the largest free family history research site on the Internet:

- More than **10 million hits** to the site per day
- Over **1 million** registered users

Facts about Ancestry.com, the largest online family history research site in the U. S. with more than 850,000 paid subscribers:

- More than **5 million** Ancestry.com users have created family trees
- More than **340 million** pages viewed in April 2008
- More than **6.4 million unique site visitors** to Ancestry.com in April 2008

Source: @comScore Media Metrix, Worldwide

THE CASE FOR



OPEN PUBLIC RECORDS

RECORDS PRESERVATION & ACCESS COMMITTEE

www.fgs.org/rpac

Supporting the
genealogical community
across the United States
in every county
in all 50 states and U. S. Territories

KEEP PUBLIC RECORDS OPEN...

Addressing THE PROS

- The U.S. Surgeon General encourages families to research cause of death of parents, grandparents and great grandparents.
- The Social Security Administration publishes *The Social Security Death Index (SSDI)* so lenders, businesses and government agencies can check online to make sure someone is not using the social security number of a deceased person.
- People need access to public records for proof of birth for passports and drivers' licenses.
- U.S. Census records are available after 72 years.
- Americans are interested in researching their cultural heritage which includes information contained in vital records.

- Genealogists are the single largest constituency of users for state archives.
Source: State Archivists' State of the State Report, January 2007

Addressing THE MYTHS

- There is no proof open records significantly contribute to ID theft or terrorism.
- Social Security numbers are rarely stolen from documents found in government offices, including court houses. They are usually stolen by thieves breaking into banking and business databases or conducting Internet scams.
- County and state vital records were not used to commit the terrorist acts on September 11, 2001, yet state legislatures have passed more than 1,000 laws changing access to public records.
Source: Robert Tanner, AP National Writer, *Analysis: States Steadily Restricting Info*, www.sunshineweek.org, March 2006

For more information:

- Visit www.fgs.org/rpac
- Read *The Case for Public Records, A Position Paper* <http://apgen.org/publications/press/APG-KGROW.pdf>
- Read *Strategy for Records Preservation and Access* available at www.fgs.org/rpac



The Records ACCESS WE NEED

The Records Preservation and Access Committee recognizes that some states are more open in providing access to vital records. However, RPAC recommends the following as a minimum:

- Certified copies should require proof of applicant's identity, direct family relationship and reason the record is needed for requests within restricted time periods.
- Non-certified copies of birth, marriage and death records should be available for informational purposes.
- Birth records may be opened to public access at any time after they are filed; if there is a restricted closure period applied, it should not exceed 100 years.
- Marriage and divorce records should be open to public access from the time they are filed, except that, when present, the Social Security numbers of living individuals should be redacted.
- Death records may be opened to public access at any time after they are filed; if there is a restricted closure period applied, it should not exceed 50 years.
- Adoption records may be opened to an adoptee who has attained the legal age of majority; if any further restricted period is applied, it should not extend beyond the adoptee's 30th birthday.
- Adoption records should be considered open records to the public after 100 years from the date of the adoption.