



**Presentation to  
SCG Genealogy SIG**

**GE**nealogical **D**ata **CO**mmunication  
**(GEDCOM)**

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# What is GEDCOM?



- **GEDCOM is just a special text file format used for transferring genealogy data**
  - **Allows transferring data between genealogy programs**
    - e.g., between PAF, Family Origins, Legacy, Ancestral File, Temple Ready, IGI, etc.
  - **Can be read (and edited) by any word / Text processing program**
    - e.g., Word, WordPerfect or WordPad
  - **GEDCOM was developed & published by the Church of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) in 1985**
    - **Original purpose was for submission of information for temple sacraments**
    - **Most / “All” genealogy programs use it for importing & exporting genealogy data**

# What are the GEDCOM Standards?



- **Current standard is version 5.5**
  - **Version 1.0 was released in 1985**
  - **Version 5.5 was released in January 1996**
    - **Less than one year after the invention of the World Wide Web**
- **New version to be released is 6.0 XML (EXtensible Markup Language), see:**
  - **<http://xml.coverpages.org/ni2002-12-28-a.html>**
  - ***GEDCOM XML Specification Release 6.0. Beta Version. Prepared by the Family and Church History Department The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. December 6, 2002***

# What the Future Holds for GEDCOM?



- Technically, GEDCOM is dead (Not from a user point of view)
- It will be replaced by EXtensible Markup Language (XML)
  - Which is related to Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) – the language of the World Wide Web (WWW)
- Markup languages have tags:
  - `<NAME>Leon Chapman</NAME>`
  - They generally feature Open & closing Tags
    - `<NAME>`, `</NAME>`
- Michael Kay has published GEDML
  - An XML version of GEDCOM
  - The GENTECH Lexicon Working Group is developing LexML
    - A combination of elements in GENTECH and the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI)
- Hopefully, the new LDS version of GEDCOM XML will be compatible with these other

# When do I use a GEDCOM?



- **Merge two databases**
  - **Your's and your spouse's master databases, or a Legacy database into a working database**
  - **Import a database from an Internet download**
- **Split your database**
  - **Divide it into your's and your spouse's ancestral lines**
  - **Divide it into your four grandparents' lines**
- **Send some ancestral line from your database to:**
  - **A relative or friend over the Internet**
  - **Other programs (PAF, FTM, etc)**
  - **Upload to a web site (Ancestry.com)**
- **Fix some PAF database structure problems**
- **Make yourself RIN 1 in the database, if you are not already RIN 1 (not a very useful exercise)**

# How well does GEDCOM Transfers Work?



- In general, “BMDB” (Birth, Marriage, Death, and Burial) information is effectively transferred
- The biological relationships of parents and children are handled well by most S/W
- Beyond these areas, it all depends on the S/W and it varies greatly
  - **The GENTECH GEDCOM TestBook Project offers more details – but is about 3-5 year old data**
  - (<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/ngsgentech/projects/TestBook2001/index.cfm>)
    - **Import ~75%, Export ~ 90%**

# Import / Export Scores

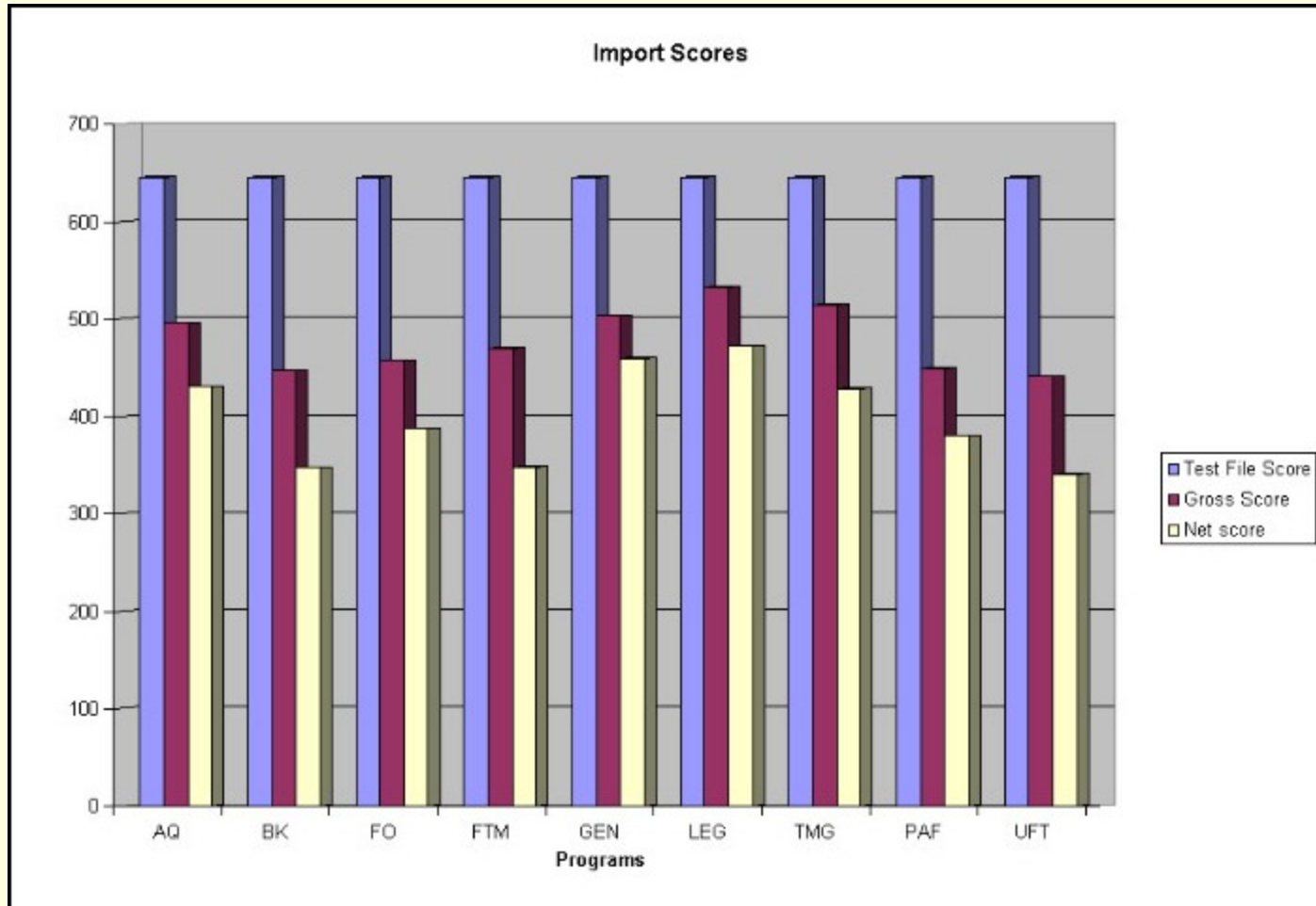
(<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/ngsgentech/projects/TestBook2001/sumchart.cfm>)



	Import					Export				
	Test File Score	Gross Score	Imp. Gross %	Net score	Imp. Net %	Maximum Score	Gross Score	Exp. Gross %	Net Score	Exp. Net %
Ancestral Quest 3 (AQ)	645	496	76.90	430	66.67	498	486	97.59	474	95.18
Brother's Keeper 6 (BK)	645	447	69.30	347	53.80	456	421	92.32	389	85.31
Family Origins 9 (FO)	645	457	70.85	387	60.00	444	444	100.00	436	98.20
Family Tree Maker 8 (FTM)	645	470	72.87	348	53.95	444	411	92.57	386	86.94
Generations G.S. 8 (GEN)	645	503	77.98	459	71.16	420	361	85.95	326	77.62
Legacy 3 (LEG)	645	532	82.48	472	72.74	525	515	98.10	486	92.57
Master Genealogist 4 (TMG)	645	514	79.69	428	66.36	489	463	94.68	453	92.64
Personal Ancestral File 5.1 (PAF)	645	449	69.61	380	58.91	495	459	92.73	435	87.88
Ultimate Family Tree (UFT)	645	441	68.37	340	52.71	330	283	85.76	257	77.88

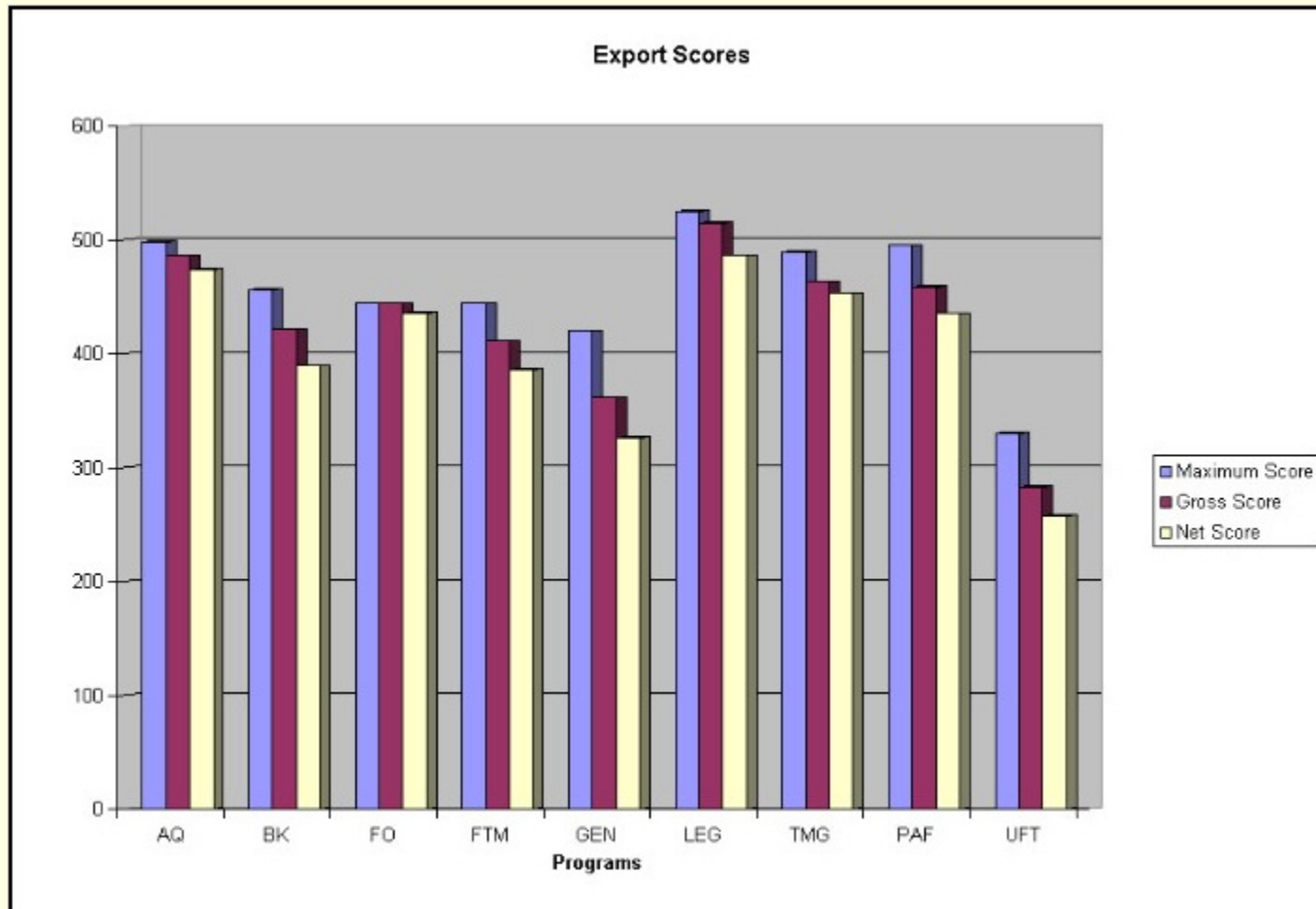
# Import Scores

(<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/ngsgentech/projects/TestBook2001/sumchart.cfm>)



# Export Scores

(<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/ngsgentech/projects/TestBook2001/sumchart.cfm>)



# GEDCOM Records



- **GEDCOMS basically take your family information and put it in an outline format.**
- **Records in a GEDCOM file are arranged in groups of lines that hold information about one individual (INDI) or one family (FAM) and each line in an individual record has a level number.**
  - **The first line of every record is numbered zero (0) to show that it is the beginning of a new record.**
  - **Within that record, different level numbers are subdivisions of the next level above it.**
  - **For example, the birth of an individual may be given level number one (1) and further information about the birth (date, place, etc.) would be given level two (2).**

# GEDCOM Records (Continued)



- After the level number, you will see a descriptive tag, which refers to the type of data contained in that line.
- Most tags are obvious:
  - **BIRT** for birth
  - **PLAC** for place
  - **but some are a little more obscure**
    - **such as BARM** for Bar Mitzvah

# GEDCOM Tags

(<http://genealogy.about.com/library/weekly/aa110100d.htm>)



- **ADDR {ADDRESS}** The contemporary place, usually required for postal purposes, of an individual, a submitter of information, a repository, a business, a school, or a company.
- ADR1 {ADDRESS1}** The first line of an address.
- ADR2 {ADDRESS2}** The second line of an address.
- ADOP {ADOPTION}** Pertaining to creation of a child-parent relationship that does not exist biologically.
- AFN {AFN}** A unique permanent record file number of an individual record stored in Ancestral File.
- AGE {AGE}** The age of the individual at the time an event occurred, or the age listed in the document.
- AGNC {AGENCY}** The institution or individual having authority and/or responsibility to manage or govern.
- ALIA {ALIAS}** An indicator to link different record descriptions of a person who may be the same person.
- ANCE {ANCESTORS}** Pertaining to forbearers of an individual.
- ANCI {ANCES\_INTEREST}** Indicates an interest in additional research for ancestors of this individual. (See also DESI)
- ANUL {ANNULMENT}** Declaring a marriage void from the beginning (never existed).
- ASSO {ASSOCIATES}** An indicator to link friends, neighbors, relatives, or associates of an individual.
- AUTH {AUTHOR}** The name of the individual who created or compiled information.
- BAPL {BAPTISM-LDS}** The event of baptism performed at age eight or later by priesthood authority of the LDS Church. (See also BAPM, next)
- BAPM {BAPTISM}** The event of baptism (not LDS), performed in infancy or later. (See also BAPL, above, and CHR, page 73.)
- BARM {BAR\_MITZVAH}** The ceremonial event held when a Jewish boy reaches age 13.
- BASM {BAS\_MITZVAH}** The ceremonial event held when a Jewish girl reaches age 13, also known as "Bat Mitzvah."
- BIRT {BIRTH}** The event of entering into life.
- BLES {BLESSING}** A religious event of bestowing divine care or intercession. Sometimes given in connection with a naming ceremony.
- BLOB {BINARY\_OBJECT}** A grouping of data used as input to a multimedia system that processes binary data to represent images, sound, and video.
- BURI {BURIAL}** The event of the proper disposing of the mortal remains of a deceased person.

# GEDCOM Example



- **0 @I2@ INDI** <- The level 0 means this is a new record. The INDI tag means the record is for an individual.
  - 1 NAME Charles Phillip /Ingalls/** <-name of individual
  - 1 SEX M** <- level 1 info denotes data about the individual in level 0, Charles Ingalls
  - 1 BIRT**
  - 2 DATE 10 JAN 1836** <- this is level 2, because it refers to the birth in level 1 above
  - 2 PLAC Cuba, Allegheny, NY**
  - 1 DEAT**
  - 2 DATE 08 JUN 1902**
  - 2 PLAC De Smet, Kingsbury, Dakota Territory**
  - 1 FAMC @F2@**
  - 1 FAMS @F3@**

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- 0 @I3@ INDI** <-A new record (level 0) for a new individual
  - 1 NAME Caroline Lake /Quiner/**
  - 1 SEX F**
  - 1 BIRT**
  - 2 DATE 12 DEC 1839**
  - 2 PLAC Milwaukee Co., WI**
  - 1 DEAT**
  - 2 DATE 20 APR 1923**
  - 2 PLAC De Smet, Kingsbury, Dakota Territory**
  - 1 FAMC @F21@** <-FAMC indicates the FAM record where this person appears as a **Child**
  - 1 FAMS @F3@** <-FAMS indicates the FAM record where this person appears as a **Spouse**

# GEDCOM Tag Example



- Tags can also serve as pointers (@I2@), which indicate a related individual, family or source within the same GEDCOM file.
  - For example, a family record (FAM) will contain pointers to the individual records (INDI) for the husband, wife and children.
- Here is the family record which contains Charles and Caroline, the two individuals

# GEDCOM Tag Example (Continued)



- **0 @F3@ FAM** <- this is family record #3, pointed to from the above individual records
- 1 HUSB @I2@** <- this is a pointer to individual record (INDI) I2, for Charles Phillip Ingalls
- 1 WIFE @I3@**
- 1 MARR**
- 2 DATE 01 FEB 1860**
- 2 PLAC Concord, Jefferson, WI**
- 1 CHIL @I1@** <- these point to the individual records for the children
- 1 CHIL @I42@**
- 1 CHIL @I44@**
- 1 CHIL @I45@**
- 1 CHIL @I47@**

# GEDCOM - a Connected Database

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- **GEDCOM is basically a connected database of records with pointers which keep all of the relationships straight**
- **While you should now be able to decipher a GEDCOM with a text editor, you will still find it much easier to read with the appropriate software**

# Is the File a GEDCOM file?



- A file is in GEDCOM format when it ends in the extension **.ged**
- If the file ends with the extension **.zip**
  - **then it has been zipped (compressed) and needs to be unzipped first**

# Save the GEDCOM File to Your Computer



- The first thing you should do is save the file to a folder on your hard drive.
  - Create a folder as follows:
    - "C:\My Documents\My Download Files\GEDCOMs\"
    - to save your GEDCOM files
  - If you're saving it from email you may want to scan it for viruses first before saving to your hard drive

# Generic Instructions to Open a GEDCOM



1. **Launch your family tree program and close any open genealogy files.**
2. **In the top-left hand corner of your screen, click the File menu.**
3. **Select either Open, Import or Import GEDCOM.**
4. **If .ged is not already highlighted in the "file type" box, then scroll down and select GEDCOM or .ged.**
5. **Browse to the location on your computer where you save your GEDCOM files and select the file that you want to open.**
6. **The program will create a new genealogy database containing the information from the GEDCOM. Enter a filename for this new database, making sure that is one that you can distinguish from your own files. Example: 'powellgedcom'**
7. **Click Save or Import.**
8. **The program may then ask you to make a few choices regarding the import of your GEDCOM file. Just follow the directions. If you're not sure what to select, then just stick with the default options.**
9. **Click OK.**
10. **A confirmation box may appear stating that your import was successful.**
11. **You should now be able to read the GEDCOM file in your genealogy software program as a regular family tree file.**

# Other ways to Open a GEDCOM file (It is basically a Text file)

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- Text Editor – Word Pad
- Word processor
- GEDCOM viewers
  - GENViewer

# Generic Instructions for Creating a GEDCOM



1. Launch your family tree program and open your genealogy file
2. In the top-left hand corner of your screen, click the File menu
3. Select either Export or Save as...
4. Change the Save As Type or Destination drop-down box to GEDCOM or .GED
5. Select the location where you'd like to save your file (*make sure it's one you can easily remember*)
6. Enter a filename such as 'powellfamilytree' (*the program will automatically add the .ged extension*)
7. Click Save or Export
8. Some type of confirmation box will appear stating that your export has succeeded
9. Click OK
10. If your genealogy software program does not have the ability to protect the privacy of living individuals, then try one of these GEDCOM privatizing programs to filter the details of living people from your original GEDCOM file
11. Your file is now ready to share with others

# How to Share My GEDCOM File



**Once you have created a GEDCOM file you can now easily share it with others via email, floppy disk/CD, or the Internet**

- **To share your GEDCOM file via email you will need to send it as an attachment to your email**
  - **Be sure to include a short note in your email telling the recipient what to expect in the attachment so that they won't delete it as a potential virus-laden attachment**
- **To share your GEDCOM file via snail mail you will need to save it to a floppy disk or burn it onto a CD**
- **You can also share your GEDCOM file with others online by uploading to one of the many pedigree databases which exist on the Web**
  - **The best of these promise not to sell your information for profit**
  - **Allow for easy searching for matches against the names in your family tree**



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# Demonstration of Creating / Saving GEDCOM Files