

Pennington Research Association



Research Committee Annual Report July 2001

Submitted by

Gene Pennington, Research Director

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Introduction

***"As genealogists we work in the present, studying the past to share in the future. How we do it today will be tested by our descendants tomorrow."*¹**

I would like to express my thanks to the members of the Executive Board for their help and support this past year. This was the first year of my second term and I believe we have made significant gains towards realizing our mission, goals and objectives and this would not have been possible without the Board's leadership.

Bobby Pennington continues his work on the scanning and indexing of the Pennington Pedigrees and the Cousins' Courier. This project will have a significant impact on the ability of the PRA to find submitted genealogical data, reports and articles to help with our research.

The Board approved a DNA Study last year and it started in May 2001. We are looking forward to the results of this study and anticipate some exciting findings.

We continued to work on perhaps the most significant project ever started by the PRA, the John French Master File (JFMF). This project was started by Ayvonne Roach and John French several years ago. Its stated purpose is to collect genealogical data from our members and other researchers to further the study of the Pennington surname.

We have completed our first cycle of collecting and distributing changes to the John French Master File (JFMF). The changes and additions have been entered into the JFMF and the new version (2000-1) has been distributed to the Group Leaders.

A second cycle has started and the collection process (submission of Petitions for Change to the JFMF) ended May 31, 2001. The process of distributing these new Petitions and several new genealogy reports and gedcom files submitted by PRA members and other researchers has started and should conclude by June 30, 2001.

While devoting major efforts to those three projects, the Research Committee has continued to maintain a presence on the Internet, establish new standards for submitting queries, data and genealogical

¹ Quote from John Vincent Wylie, Professional Genealogist in an article written in *Everton's Genealogical Helper*, July/August 1998, page 223.

reports, recruited several new Family Group Leaders and continued to improve communication links with our members, the Board and Family Groups.

This report reflects the abilities and qualities of the members of the Research Committee. Without their skills, tireless efforts, dedication and concern for the PRA, none of our successes would have been achieved.

I especially want to recognize the contributions made by the Assistant Research Directors this year. The PRA is indeed fortunate to have such an outstanding Team.

- Bobby Pennington -- Responsible for the Pennington Pedigrees and Courier indexing project.
- Jim Pennington -- Responsible for the John French Master File (JFMF). Jim resigned from this position late in 2000 but is the new Co-Group Leader for Group 10.
- John Alan Pennington -- Responsible for our Family Groups and the DNA Study.

All of our current Group Leaders are working hard to help their Group members further their research, collect new information and to identify sources and evidence for their research.

Amongst these Group Leaders are four (4) that deserve special recognition for their work and the great examples they have set for other Group Leaders and researchers.

Some have established mail lists for their group members, created web sites for their groups (complete with sources, evidence, census records and photographs) and located original documents that support some or all of their group's genealogy.

Two (2) of the Group Leaders have identified a common ancestor and are working now to confirm their preliminary research. If they are successful in finding the evidence, it will affect several of the existing Family Groups and may result in the combination of 3 – 4 of the Groups.

These exceptional Group Leaders are:

Carmen Johnson, Group 7
Renee' Davis, Group 9
Shirley Erickson, Group 11
Ruth Voshell Stonesifer, Group 21

I want to recognize the great work by Margaret E. Wood, our Obituary Database Editor and most recently, Co-Group Leader of Group 10. Since taking on this important job two years ago, she has entered over hundreds of obituaries on the GenConnect Board on the Internet.

While this position is not part of the Research Committee, I believe Margaret's contribution is remarkable and has helped the Pennington Research Association meet one of its' major goals.

Projects

The Research Committee continues to be very busy. With the adoption of a 5-year Strategic Plan by the Board, the Research Committee established new goals and objectives. We identified several major projects to work on this year and we have completed most of them.

- Create a new web site – Completed.
- Continue to make changes to the John French Master File (JFMF) and develop a process to disseminate the data – On-Going.
- Pennington Pedigrees Indexing (PRA Index Project) - Continue with project and look for new ways to disseminate the data – 95% Complete.
- DNA Study - Started
- CD – How the PRA can publish a CD and make it available to PRA members. – Completed Report

These projects are listed by their priority. They were assigned these priorities based on discussions with the Board, the Research Committee and what I thought must be completed in order to accomplish our primary goals and objectives.

Goals and Objectives

I am happy to report that we have been very successful in meeting our goals and objectives. Some will always be "open" because they are always in progress. A few are still being worked on at this time and we expect to soon complete them.

The PRA Research Committee has established a set of goals and objectives to help the PRA accomplish its' mission.

Goal 1

To collect, preserve, maintain and disseminate materials relating to the genealogical structure of the Pennington Family. To accomplish this goal, we will:

- Strive to be the most comprehensive source of accurate genealogical information, material and events concerning the Pennington Family.
- Strive to become a clearinghouse of current genealogical material on Pennington family descendants, including, but not limited to births, deaths, marriages, achievements, and biographical materials.
- Establish a set of standards for genealogical material submitted, retained and disseminated.
- Establish and maintain the highest possible ethics and sense of propriety while accomplishing our stated goals and objectives.
- Establish and maintain a presence on the Internet using those technologies available to the Pennington Research Association.
- Encourage and assist Pennington Research Association members in their research and promote the submission of research by members.

Goal 2

To maintain a program of genealogical research of the Pennington Family. To accomplish this goal, we will:

- Identify and prioritize research projects for the Pennington Research Association.
- Provide supervision and direction for Pennington Research Association Family Groups and their leaders.
- Answer queries from Pennington Research Association members and other researchers about genealogical information. To meet this objective we will:

- Establish a set of standards for the submission of queries by researchers.
- Establish an organized method of handling queries regarding the genealogy of the Pennington Family.
- Establish a method of handling any genealogical misinformation about the Pennington Family, whether it is in printed or electronic form.

Noteworthy Accomplishments

- Improved communications with members and other researchers. For the second year in a row there was a major increase in the number of queries and general e-mail messages. I have been averaging about 20 queries per month sent to us from the PRA web site. I reply to each query and post the query on the PRA-L mail list (with the author's approval) and on our web site along with my reply message. These queries and my reply message are sent to the Editor of the Pedigrees to be published in the Pedigrees. I have been averaging about 5 general e-mail messages per day from PRA members and other researchers. I am also hosting meetings on the Internet using free technology available to anybody who wants to download it from the Internet. This promises to be very interesting and I believe holds a great deal of promise for our future. It will have a significant impact on the way we communicate with researchers and our members.
- We completed the first updating of the JFMF. Genealogy reports and gedcom files have been placed on the web site for our Group Leaders or they have been sent a CD. The new version is JFMF version 2000-1. We are presently collecting new information to be added to JFMF (version 2000-1) and hope to complete this next cycle by December 31, 2001.
- Collection of genealogical information from new members and other members has improved. I collected eight (8) new reports and forwarded them to the Editor of the Pedigrees to be published. They will also be added to the JFMF later this year.

- We launched the new web site. The comments have been very positive. We continue to add new features and information to the web site. Some examples are:
 - A new privacy statement
 - We joined the ICRA rating system
 - An easy to use method to submit a query
 - An easy to use method to join the PRA
 - An easy to use method to order publications
 - An easy to use method to register for the annual reunion
 - An easy to use method to join the PRA-L mail list
 - A new search engine to make it easier to search our web site and the World Wide Web.
 - An easy to use feedback form to let us know how the web site is doing.
 - Photographs of Pennington ancestors
 - Documents concerning Pennington ancestors
 - Monthly listing of queries and my replies
 - Easy to find and use page listing our Family Groups
 - Easy to find and use page listing our Board, Staff and Group Leaders.
 - Special folders for the Executive Board, Group Leaders and Staff that contain genealogical information, reports, PRA Membership rosters, PRA official crests and several other useful files and pages to help each of our volunteers to do their job.
- All of our Group Leaders have done just an outstanding job but some of them excelled. They have established mail lists for their group members, created web sites for their group and actively posted messages to our mail lists.
- We continue to successfully locate new Family Group Leaders and have started two (2) new Family Groups. We now have 25 Family Group Leaders for 32 of our Family Groups!
 - To help address some of the concerns raised by the Board last year, we have implemented a new set of expectations for the Group Leaders.
- The Pennington Research Association now operates all but one (1) of the newly created Pennington surname boards on GenConnect on the Internet. Now anybody can post a query or

post information for wills, pensions, obituaries, bibles, etc. These have contributed significantly to our mission by allowing the posting, retention, and searching of Pennington genealogy data on the Internet. Margaret Wood, our Obituary Database Editor, has added hundreds of obituaries to the Obits board.

- Hundreds of new and returning Pennington Research Association members were sent "Welcome to the Pennington Research Association" and "New Member Process" messages via e-mail or a letter by U.S. Postal Service. This follow up, combined with the new member material sent by our Membership Chair, Barbara Pennington, has been a tremendous success. I continually hear back from new members and in many cases some of them have become Family Group Leaders. This process has greatly enhanced our ability to reach out to new and returning members and has helped us meet our primary goal of providing value to our members.

Family Groups and DNA Study

By John Alan Pennington
Assistant Research Director for Family Groups
July 2001

There are presently 32 active family groups in the Pennington Research Association. Of these, 25 have leaders. This is a net increase of 3 new leaders since the 2000 Annual Report, and 11 since 1999. Nearly 80% of the family groups have a leader, and only 7 groups are without leaders. This is the highest occupancy level in recent memory. Of the present 25 leaders, only one, Sidney Graveston, does not have a computer and email. He lives in England and is available for queries by mail.

As was the case last year, there are a number of family group leaders who have been very active and extraordinary, improving the quality of research within their family group by significant degrees. Research director Gene Pennington has taken steps to publicly recognize these individuals. There are also four family group web pages established by group leaders, separate from those of the PRA. These are designed and maintained by group leaders Bobby Pennington (FG 6), Carmen Johnson (FG 7), Rod Pennington and Sue Webb (FG 8), and Paul Pennington (FG 28).

The process established over the past two years for adding new information to the John French Master Files, or correcting information already there, has proven effective. The quality and quantity of information in these files has steadily improved, thanks to regular submissions by group leaders. It is safe to say that Pennington family information has never been better, and it seems likely that it will continue to improve at a satisfying pace for years to come. The family group leaders are responsible for this progress.

The DNA project is now well underway, and is especially relevant to any consideration of the family groups. The goal of this project is to clarify the relationship between the various family groups by analysis of the Y chromosome of living Pennington males. The Y chromosome is inherited only from the father, and therefore indicates a direct paternal line of descent. This offers a potentially powerful tool for clustering the family groups by a common ancestor, which at the least should indicate the direction of research for group leaders. Results of the first phase of this study will be forthcoming in about two months, and are potentially of great utility in furthering Pennington family research.

Web Site

Our new web site has been very successful and has helped us to meet one of our major goals.

Copyright

To the best of my knowledge, everything on the new PRA web site is protected by copyright laws and anything submitted by somebody is used and published with their consent. To the best of my knowledge, everything on the new PRA web site (file, graphic or page) either belongs to the PRA or we have obtained the author/creator's consent to publish.

Privacy Statement

A new privacy statement was placed on the web site so our visitors know exactly what our positions on this important subject are and how we manage their information. Below is an abstract of our privacy statement which is posted on our web site.

At the Pennington Research Association, we respect and protect the privacy of those who visit or use our web site. We want you to know how your information is used. To demonstrate our commitment to fair information practices, we have adopted these privacy guidelines.

We subscribe to these principals:

- Notice - We post our privacy statement which fully discloses what information is collected, how it is used and with whom it is shared. We will make every effort to inform our visitors when our privacy statement has been modified.
- Choice - We give our visitors the option of providing information other than what is necessary to complete a form, such as a membership application.
- Security - We make reasonable efforts to protect personal information from outside access.

This privacy statement defines privacy aspects specific to the Pennington Research Association web site.

Our Philosophy and Practices

We want to give you the comfort and confidence you need to fully participate in our web site so that we can better serve your needs. Therefore, here are the principles governing our information practices and other privacy aspects of our web site:

- The Pennington Research Association does not share, give away or sell any personal information about its' members or web site visitors to any person or company for any reason.
- We provide you notice of our web site information practices.
- We give you choices about how the personally identifiable information that you provide us may be used when you submit your membership application or any submission form on our web site.
- We let you update or correct the personally identifiable information that you provide us when you submit your membership application.
- We work to protect personally identifiable information from loss, misuse and unauthorized alteration.
- We provide methods for you to contact us about our information practices and other aspects of privacy.
- The Pennington Research Association follows the genealogical guidelines for publishing web pages on the Internet as published by the National Genealogical Society. For more information, go to National Genealogical Society, then click on the section titled "Genealogical Standards" and then click on the section titled "Guidelines for Publishing Web Pages on the Internet".

Labeled with ICRA (www.icra.org)

We now subscribe to the Internet Content Rating Association (ICRA) to help visitors know that our web site subscribes to strict guidelines of labeling our web site content.

The ICRA is an international, independent organization that empowers the public, especially parents, to make informed decisions about electronic media by means of the open and objective labeling of content. ICRA's dual aims are to:

- protect children from potentially harmful material; and,
- to protect free speech on the internet.

There are two elements to the system:

- Web authors fill in an online questionnaire describing the content of their site, simply in terms of what is and isn't present. ICRA then generates a Content Label (a short piece of computer code) which the author adds to his/her site.
- Users, especially parents of young children, can then set their internet browser to allow or disallow access to web sites based

on the objective information declared in the label and the subjective preferences of the user. The ICRA system can be used with Microsoft's Internet Explorer immediately, with wider applications under development. The existing RSACi labels can continue to be used in both Internet Explorer and Netscape Navigator but will be phased out over time.

A key point is that the Internet Content Rating Association does not rate internet content - the content providers do that, using the ICRA system. ICRA makes no value judgment about sites.

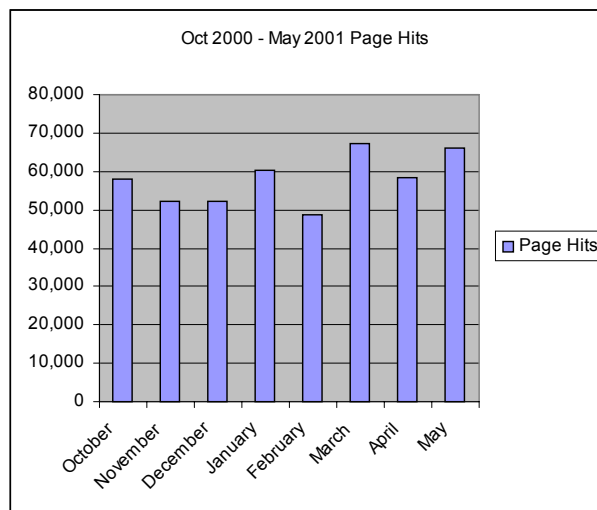
ICRA is a non-profit making organization with offices in both Brighton, UK and Washington DC, USA. Members include many of the internet industry's leading names from around the world.

Conclusion

While we have implemented several ways to use our web site, we must continue to explore new ways to provide on-line access to the information the PRA has such as Family Groups, the Pedigree and Courier indexes and perhaps even the JFMF. Each of these data sources has tremendous value to our members and other researchers. We need to find a method to make the data available on-line so it can not only be read, but can be updated by authorized members of the PRA.

Remember that the future of the web site is limited only by our imagination.

Below is a chart summarizing the number of page hits our new web site has experienced since October 2000.



Mail List

As a result of last year's Board action, we only support 1 mail list - the PRA-L mail list on Rootsweb.

The purpose of the PRA-L mail list is:

1. To provide information for researchers of the Pennington surname;
2. To provide general information such as announcements, research tips and resources and;
3. To provide an easy method for PRA members to communicate with each other;
4. A discussion list for research and;
5. To provide a source for queries and answers to queries for the editor of the Pedigrees should he choose to use them.

PRA Indexing

Bobby Pennington continues to support this important project. A summary of his report is included for your review. You will notice that he has not completed scanning and indexing the most recent issues of the Pedigrees.

One of the projects the Research Committee adopted is to find better ways to disseminate the data contained in the PRA Indexing program. In my discussions with Bobby about this project, several suggestions were made.

Based on my discussions with Bobby and with other members of the Research Committee, I would like to suggest that we move this project from being the responsibility of the Research Committee to that of the Editor of the Pedigrees.

My reasons are:

- Over the past couple of years there has been a strong desire expressed to place electronic copies of the Pedigrees and Courier on the PRA web site and making them available to PRA members.
- We believe this can be accomplished fairly easily since the Pedigrees are now being created by computer and almost all of the previous publications have been scanned and are available.
- With the electronic copies John L. Pennington has of the Pedigrees since he started as the Editor and the copies Bobby has saved (for use on the PRA Index program), it should be a fairly straight forward process to place these on the PRA web site and make them available to members.

This project was one the Research Committee has managed but since it really involves the Pedigrees and John is exploring new ways to make the data available, the Indexing Project fits nicely into John's area of responsibility.

I accepted the responsibility to manage the Indexing Project initially to ensure the program continued forward. Now that our Editor has a

couple of years of experience, I believe it is time to pass the responsibility to him.

Should we move forward with this suggestion, John and Bobby can work out the details of how the program will function and I can support them in placing the material on the PRA web site. Bobby is a skilled web designer and should not have many problems implementing this new service.

This is a suggestion only and is not on the Board's agenda for our meeting. I have shared this with John but I do not know his position on the suggestion.

PRA Index Program

By: Bobby E. Pennington, Charleston, SC
On-Line Group Leader, Group VI
Ass't Research Director Scanning/Indexing Project
<http://www.members.home.net/bobpenn1/>

Annual Report (2001)

PENNINGTON PEDIGREES
SCANNING AND INDEXING PROJECT May 2001

VOL & NO	SCANNED	PROOFED	INDEXED	MERGED
PED3101.DOC	NO	0%	YES	YES
PED3102.DOC	NO	0%	YES	YES
PED3201.DOC	NO	0%	YES	YES
PED3202.DOC	NO	0%	YES	YES
PED3203.DOC	NO	0%	NO	NO
PED3301.DOC	NO	0%	NO	NO
Complete:	63	59	49	49
Incomplete:	6	10	20	20
Total:	69	69	69	69

PENNINGTON COUSINS' COURIER
INDEXING PROJECT STATUS May 2001

Iss/Dt/File	SCANNED	PROOFED	INDEXED	MERGED	ISSUE
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Complete:	57	57	57	57
Incomplete:	0	0	0	0
Total:	57	57	57	57

FINAL REPORT - PENNINGTON COUSINS' COURIER INDEXING
PROJECT COMPLETE.

JFMF

The John French Master File (JFMF) continues to pose a number of major hurdles for the Research Committee. Of all the projects undertaken by our Research Committee, this one has the potential to be of the most value to our members and researchers.

I know that several of our Group Leaders would like to discuss the JFMF and develop methods to make the changes an easier process. I hope to meet with some of the Group Leaders at this year's meeting and discuss their ideas with them.

The best method to address the JFMF and all of its problems is to have a meeting with as many of the Group Leaders as possible and to set specific topics for discussion and to formulate a new plan for working with the JFMF.

I hope that within the next 3 years we can hold such a meeting. Between now and then, I will discuss the JFMF and its' problems by holding on-line meetings on the Internet. I have held one "test" meeting on-line and the results are promising. I hope to attract more of the Group Leaders to these meetings so we can have a through demonstration and discussion.

Electronic Publication

The Board last year approved a "Test CD" project. We concluded the project and the Board has been waiting for a final report from the Research Director to help decide if the PRA should publish a CD and make it available to PRA members and other researchers.

Background:

The "Test CD" experienced delays which were caused by computer problems and personal time commitments. We finally started working on the project around October 1999 and mailed out the actual test CDs around April 2000.

Estimated Hours: 200
Expenses: \$750 (*This does not include expenses paid by me for equipment, software, supplies and mailing expenses)

*The initial expenses were estimated to be between \$1,500 and \$3,000. This includes the software needed to convert the data into a format readable by any computer, the purchase of a device to write the data to a CD and the production cost for 200 to 500 CDs. We only produced 50 of the CDs.

If the incorporation, insurance and policy and procedures issues can be successfully concluded, then the PRA should consider creating more CDs. Whether or not we sell them or give them away to our members and what content is placed on the CDs is a matter still to be discussed by the Board.

All of the feedback was positive and several suggestions were made to improve it should the Board approve the publication of CDs.

For example, it was suggested we include all of the JFMF in a "For Sale" CD. However, as you recall, there has been quite a bit of discussion and concern expressed about selling the valuable information in the JFMF and making ALL of it available (even to our membership). This is a critical issue that needs to be voted on and approved by the Board BEFORE we make a "For Sale" CD.

Many delays caused the entire process to take much longer than anybody predicted. Since we are all volunteers, we just can't rely on any type of production schedule. In this case, volunteers faltered due to their own personal work loads.

I think we have a much better understanding of the process and have some of the "glitches" worked out now. I learned that in order to create the genealogical reports and the Gedcom files for just the 18 or so groups that were on the CD, it took many more hours than I had anticipated. To do all 32 groups it will obviously take much longer.

Remember that there are several steps necessary AFTER the reports and Gedcom files have been created. You need time to organize all the material, create draft versions of the documents and files, proof read them, and then create a final version of everything. Then you have to create a "master" copy of what will be on the CD. Then you have to create a "master CD" that will be used to create the finished product.

Bottom line is this: If we are going to publish a CD, we can only publish one (1) per year rather than the two (2) that we had previously discussed. We must have plenty of lead time between the start of the collection process (making changes to JFMF) and the time we want to start producing the CD. Then we need plenty of time between the start and finish of the publishing so we have time to advertise (if we decide to sell them) to our members and to mail them out.

Remember also that EACH Family Group Leader was sent their own Group's Gedcom file AND the "unconnected" Group files from the JFMF so they did have quite a bit of information. In discussions with Jim and John Pennington, we felt that with the information on the "Test" CD, the Group Leaders would be in excellent shape. This year all of that information has been placed on the PRA web site in individual group folders accessible to only the Group Leader (with a couple of exceptions).

Plus, on the CD they were all given the Petitions for Change to the JFMF along with reports and Gedcom files from new PRA members and non-PRA members who want to add their genealogy information to the JFMF. That is quite a bit of information to review, comment on and submit a report back to me.

Now that we have resolved some of the publication issues, such as copyrights and changes, I see great potential in using this format to distribute information and genealogy data to our members.

If we add more to the CD (copies of the Pedigrees and/or the Research Library), the cost of the CD should go up accordingly. Of course, there is a down side to this. The sale of actual paper copies of these items will decrease since they will be available on the CD. However, given the convenience and electronic searching capabilities of a CD, it will make the CD a more popular choice with most researchers and one which gives more value to our members who have a computer.

Think of the potential if you had a CD that contains the JFMF, the PRA Index program AND an electronic copy of ALL of our Pedigrees and Couriers! Now, add to it an index and electronic copies of ALL of the books and papers in our Research Library! Wow!

One thing to consider here is exactly how we are going to advertise a "For Sale" CD, handle the production and the mailing. We need to talk with Flo on this subject.

The "For Sale" CD will be of invaluable help to members of the PRA. It will go a long way to help us accomplish our Mission.

Expenses and Revenue:

It cost about \$6 per CD to make, insert into the cardboard sleeves and to mail a CD. If we sell each CD for \$10 and sell 400, that equals about \$4,000 against an expense of about \$2,400 which nets \$1,600. If we sell the CD for \$15 each, we net another \$5 per CD.

I personally think the sale price of the CD should reflect the value of the information contained on it along with any cost to produce it along with handling and shipping costs. I think a price range between \$20 - \$30 per CD is reasonable.

If we add more to the CD (copies of the Pedigrees and/or the Research Library), the cost of the CD should go up accordingly. Of course, there is a down side to this. The sale of actual paper copies of these items will decrease since they will be available on the CD. However, given the convenience and electronic searching capabilities of a CD, it will make the CD the better choice and one which gives more value to our members who have a computer.

Future

Even though I was some what disturbed last year over some issues facing the PRA, I still believe the future of the Pennington Research Association is very bright. We know there will continue to be challenges to face and obstacles to overcome, but with hard work and dedication, we can overcome these challenges and obstacles.

For example, if we can successfully resolve the issues I discussed in the section about electronic publications, I believe we can meet our goal of becoming the best source of genealogical information in the world on the Pennington family.

I wish to emphasize again this year that I believe we have a responsibility to publish our material in printed and electronic format so that libraries, research facilities and all of us can continue to enjoy the information and fellowship offered by the Pennington Research Association.

We should continue to explore new ways of making our information available in printed and electronic media and on the Internet. This poses a number of significant challenges. Security of the data, the ability to make it available to members only, the cost to provide this service and how to make it available for updating by Family Group Leaders. All of these challenges, and others yet to be identified, need to be carefully examined.

The purpose of an association such as the Pennington Research Association is to foster the exchange of genealogical information and to embrace others in our extended family.

I encourage the Board members to renew their commitment to our vision, our mission and our goals.