

Requirement to Support Family History Data

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1. Abstract

This is a functional requirement for the support of family history data rather than mere genealogical data. Family history data has, by far, the bigger scope. By supporting this approach from the outset then genealogy should be supported implicitly. However, the reverse approach may severely limit our ability to extend the Data Model.

2. Requirement

The terms *family history* and *genealogy* are now widely accepted as being distinct in terms of the data that we amass. If our Data Model aims initially for genealogy then it may impact our ability to accommodate family history at a later date because it would result in a distorted structuring.

Genealogy, in its literal sense, is the study of biological lineage, and the creation of family trees or pedigree charts. Family History, on the other hand, is a type of [microhistory](#) and requires a way of representing any and all information about the lives of our ancestors.

Perhaps the main differences are that we must accommodate events and narrative text in order to adequately support family history.

Family history, and probably history in general, requires support for events. Events are core concepts that link a place to a date (or even to a date range). Multiple people can be linked to a shared event and distinguished by their 'role'. Having this temporal dimension allows us to attach evidence related to events, as opposed to simple properties attached to individuals in a tree. For instance, you may have multiple sources supporting a marriage, but that shared marriage event was part of several lives. Failure to accommodate events means we cannot link evidence and conclusions in the correct way – this point is made separately, and in more detail, in the proposal entitled *Record_Linkages*.

Narrative text is required for biographical narrative, the history of places, and the transcription of any number of documents including personal papers, letters, and Wills. This is not the same as simple notes used for annotation. This is described separately in the proposal entitled *Narrative_Text*.

3. References

The Society of Genealogists publishes a distinction between the two concepts at: <http://www.sog.org.uk/education/gandfh.shtml>.

The difference between Family History and Genealogy was also answered on StackExchange at: <http://genealogy.stackexchange.com/q/1424/108>.

A very compact quote from Dr Nick Barrett on the subject:

"We use genealogy and family history as though they are one and the same thing, but of course they are not. Genealogy is a purer search for historical connectivity between generations - building a family tree or pedigree, if you like - whereas family history is a broader piece of research into their lives and activities"

This is from *Your Family History* magazine, March 2013, Issue 38, Page 74.