Even When You Thought You Covered Everything ...

by Jean Wilcox Hibben, PhD, MA, CG



I have been asked to do some *freebies* lately for groups that were unfamiliar with genealogy. Seeing this as a way to promote myself as well as the activity, I figured I could *write off* the experience as *advertising*, thus justifying it to my accountant, who is anxious to see me charge more, not less, for my *gigs*.

The one I want to focus on here was for a Library Training Day for our county library system. And it's a big system. But the branch libraries do not have the funds to subscribe to Ancestry.com (which makes me wonder how they had the funds to put on the elaborate training day—oh, wait, it's because the lecturers were doing it for free!). Patrons keep coming in to ask for genealogy help, but the librarians don't know what to do. I agreed to present a lecture and a lab (two hours total) to prepare the librarians to answer basic questions and know where to send patrons for the more involved things.

The first person I spoke with (who asked me to do two hours) was thrilled. She told her *boss* and he was not (thrilled, that is). He called me and said that I could use the computer lab for my presentation, but no way could I take two of their hours. I told him that if all I was doing was teaching and demonstrating, there would be no time for them to try it on-site if given only one hour, so I didn't need a computer lab. I couldn't promise that people would walk away with anything more than some vague ideas (knowing that *hands on* is one of the best teachers). I would need only the projector and hookup to the Internet to do a live demo of FamilySearch and maybe some other non-subscription sites (time permitting). I thought he understood. Big mistake.

So, last week I arrived at the event to find that, indeed, there was a location for me and a large number of computer stations arranged in an L-shape around the stacks! No screen, no projector. Luckily I had been invited to come to lunch an hour before my presentation, so I went first to find my *room* and realized the problem. I got the attention of some people who knew what was going on (and there were scant few of those in the approximately 500 people in attendance) and they promised to get me a projector. I requested an actual space where people could both view the projection and hear me! (No mics at this place.) I went to eat lunch; they went to solve the problem.

Good thing I eat fast. Nothing had been done after almost an hour. I located my *helpers* again and they promised to have it all settled and move me to a better location. This they did, two minutes before I was to start. But I was able to move to a much more user-friendly environment with my thirty students in tow. (FYI, I was told there would be twenty students so I brought only twenty-five handouts. Oh, well, it's a library! They can make copies for themselves!)

I learned two things from this experience: 1) do not assume that when the program chair says "I understand what you need," that he/she really does; and 2) arrive early to cover the situation when he/she has completely misunderstood.

Now, I want to add another thing I discovered. I rarely use *live Internet* for my presentations because I don't trust it, or the sites I want, to be functioning, so I had a backup program on PowerPoint with me. But the Internet option worked great and I discovered that the "Ctrl +" command is fantastic for zeroing in on something in particular so everyone can see, then reverse with "Ctrl –" to get back to the standard view. It was so successful that I may do some more of these live demos, but I'll still have my back up PowerPoint program just in case.

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