



Michelle D. Novak
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2019 Talk Topics

Speaker Contact

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Personal Statement + Experience

In my professional life as a professional brand designer and developer (29+ years) and business owner (22+ years), I am experienced in giving large-scale presentations and breaking down complex topics into working methodology. I also teach MS Word and MS PowerPoint and have trained users of all skill levels for private corporations including AIG, Haverford Trust Company, and SEI.

My genealogical research started, as many do today, with clicking leaves on Ancestry.com. Since then, I have attended numerous talks and conferences (as an attendee and a speaker), completed advanced certificate programs, and have stepped up on dozens of society and volunteer projects and initiatives. A project called "Bergen County in Five Objects," received a 2016 Special Project grant from Bergen County, NJ, and the New Jersey Early Land Records Project received grants from the Society of Colonial Wars in the State of New Jersey and the National Archives' National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). I also have received awards for my work with The Genealogical Society of Bergen County's quarterly newsletter, *The Archivist* from the International Society of Family History Writers and Editors (ISFHWE) and the National Genealogical Society.

In both my genealogical editorial positions and teaching, my articles focus on explaining complex research and technology issues and breaking them down into manageable, actionable components.

I love presenting and am a high-energy presenter who is adept at tailoring my talks to the interests of those who attend. I am especially passionate about society management, growing membership, and inspiring societies to examine their mission and reinvigorate their membership.

These topics are close to my interest, reflective of my expertise, and I am happy to share these areas with the genealogical community.

Recent Talks and Workshops

- **Association of Professional Genealogists, Webinar** (June 2019)
"Taking Word to the Next Level"
- **Museum of Chinese in America, NYC** (May 2019)
"Picturing Your Research—Finding, Procuring, and Preserving Images"
- **Museum of Chinese in America, NYC** (March 2019)
"Organizing (and Staying Sane with) Your Genealogy" (*Revised*)
- **Association of Professional Genealogists, Webinar** (February 2019)
"Five Things Every Professional Should Know How to Do in Word"
- **The Genealogical Society of Bergen County (GSBC), Ridgewood, NJ** (November 2018)
"Picturing Your Research—Finding, Procuring, and Preserving Images"
- **Bucks County (PA) Genealogical Society / Washington Crossing, PA** (April 2018)
"Picturing Your Research—Finding, Procuring, and Preserving Images"

- **Association of Professional Genealogists, NY-Metro Chapter, NYC** (February 2018)
 “Picturing Your Research—Finding, Procuring, and Preserving Images”
- **New Jersey State Library, Trenton, NJ** (February 2018)
 “Organizing (and Staying Sane with) Your Genealogy” (*Revised*)
- **Museum of Chinese in America, NYC** (June 2018)
 “Organizing (and Staying Sane with) Your Genealogy” (*Revised*)
- **New York Technology SIG, NYC** (November 2017)
 “Picturing Your Research—Finding, Procuring, and Preserving Images”
- **Wisconsin State Genealogical Society, Webinar** (December 2017)
 “Taming Transcription”
- **Association of Professional Genealogists, Professional Management Conference (APG PMC), Arlington, VA** (September–October 2017)
 “Taking Word to the Next Level” (two-hour professional workshop)
- **National Genealogical Society 2017 Family History Conference, Raleigh, NC** (May 2017)
 “Organizing (and Staying Sane with) Your Genealogy;”
 “Picturing Your Research—Finding, Procuring, and Preserving Images”
- **New England Regional Genealogical Consortium, Society Day, Springfield, MA** (April 2017)
 “Men are on Blogs; Women are on Facebook,”
 “Societies—Why 'Us versus Them' Will Fail You Both”
- **APG NY-Metro Chapter, NYC** (December 2016)
 “Social Media for Genealogists” (preview of a talk in-formation)
- **The Genealogical Society of Bergen County (GSBC), Ridgewood, NJ** (2014–2016), “Bergen County in Six Objects,” “Organizing (and Staying Sane with) Your Genealogy,” “Researching Your NJ Rev War Ancestors,” “Researching Your NJ Civil War Ancestors,” “National Archives 101,” “Taming Transcription”
- **Ridgewood Public Library Lock-In, Ridgewood, NJ** (October 2016)
 “I’ve Clicked on a Million Leaves—Now What?,” “DNA Testing 101”
- **Ridgewood Public Library Tech Class, Ridgewood, NJ** (September 2016)
 “Demystifying Ancestry.com”
- **APG Virtual Chapter, Webinar** (September 2016 x2)
 “Five Things Every Presenter Should Know about PowerPoint”
- **New York Public Library 2016 Family History Day, NYC** (June 2016)
 “I’ve Clicked on a Million Leaves—Now What?”
- **NYG&B, Webinar** (June 2016)
 “Five Things Every Genealogist Should Know How to Do in Word”
- **APG Writers’ SIG, APG NY-Metro Chapter and APG NJ Chapter** (May, June, and July 2016)
 “Five Things Every Genealogist Should Know How to Do in Word”
- **History Camp, Boston, MA** (March 2016)
 “New and Overlooked Resources for Revolutionary and Civil War Research”
- **The Genealogy Event, NYC** (October 2015)
 “Organizing (and Staying Sane with) your Genealogy,” Society Spotlight Panel Discussion

Upcoming talks:

- **New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, NYG&B Digitization Week** (September 2019)
 “Picturing Your Research” Two-Part Workshop
- **St. Francis College, Brooklyn Heights, NY** (TBD)

Speaker Biography—25 Words

Michelle D. Novak is a brand designer, genealogist, and teacher. She is a Trustee of GSBC, and Editor of the GSBC's award-winning newsletter, "The Archivist."

Speaker Biography—50 Words

Michelle D. Novak is a professional brand designer (mnd.nyc), genealogist, and teacher. She holds a BFA from RISD and is a MLIS student at Rutgers University. Novak is a Trustee of the GSBC, Editor of the GSBC's national award-winning newsletter, "The Archivist," Webmaster, and a former Trustee of GSNJ.

Speaker Biography—100 Words

Michelle D. Novak is a brand designer at [MND] (mnd.nyc) which serves financial services, education, and technology; genealogist; and teacher. She is a Master of Information student at Rutgers University, holds a BFA from RISD, and certificates from BU, Gen-Fed, and GRIP. Novak is Trustee and Webmaster for the Genealogical Society of Bergen County (GSBC) and a former Trustee of the Genealogical Society of New Jersey. She also serves as Project Administrator for the GSNJ-NJSA New Jersey Early Land Records Project; Editor of the GSBC's national award-winning newsletter, "The Archivist;" and is involved with numerous transcription, indexing, publicity, and digitization projects.

Speaker Biography—100+ Words



Michelle D. Novak is a Master of Information (MI, formerly MLIS) student at Rutgers University and holds a BFA from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). In 1997 she founded [MND] (www.mnd.nyc), a NYC Brand-Design firm serving clients in financial services, education, healthcare, and technology. MND's clients include Haverford Trust, Drexel Morgan, the Clinton Global Initiative, Psionic, SEI, the Wendy Williams Show, City Harvest, St. Francis College, the Visiting Nurse Association Health Group of NJ, the

International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, the National Genealogical Society, the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society, and the RAPID Institute for Process Intensification, AICHe.

She is a graduate of the Boston University CE Certificate of Genealogical Research program and holds certificates from the Genealogical Institute on Federal Records (Gen-Fed), and the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh (GRIP).

Novak is a former Board Member and Treasurer of the NY Chapter, American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) and the Genealogical Society of New Jersey (GSNJ). She is a current Trustee and Webmaster for the Genealogical Society of Bergen County, NJ (GSBC) and Project Administrator for the New Jersey Early Land Records Project (njlandrecords.org) a GSNJ project with the New Jersey State Archives. The Project funds an initiative currently underway at the New Jersey State Archives to process, conserve, and index more than 80,000 land records—most of which were practically inaccessible to researchers and in private hands for more than 350 years. For GSBC, she serves as Webmaster; Chair of the Social Media Committee; and Editor of the GSBC's nationally award-winning (ISFHWE and NGS) newsletter, "The Archivist;" and is involved with numerous transcription, indexing, publicity, and digitization projects.

GENERAL TOPICS

“Picturing” Your Research—Finding, Procuring, and Preserving Images

Did you realize that you have a UNIQUE, never shared before collection of archival materials in your house right now? Your family photos! Your research can come alive with images but finding, scanning, and preserving them can be a daunting prospect for many researchers. In this talk, we’ll look at all three—from the view of a researcher, archivist (in training), designer, and photographer, Michelle D. Novak. She will show us how to best scan the images you have, ways to find images in collections to supplement your research, new online resources to help identify those mystery people, and share some tips for protecting the photos and artifacts for future generations. (P.S., It’s her favorite talk!)

Audience: Beginner–Advanced

Organizing (and Staying Sane with) Your Genealogy

There are as many ways to organize genealogical information as ancestors in our family tree—and most find that they improve their methods as their records grow. Michelle D. Novak will explore organizational methods for digitizing, naming, and organizing your paper and digital files, discuss common technology pitfalls to avoid, and present ideas on to help your research live beyond today’s technology. We’ll draw inspiration from the past, set up common-sense systems, protect against “a matter of when” disasters, and find inspiring ways to share research with your family.

Audience: Beginner–Advanced

I’ve Clicked on a Million Leaves—Now What?

You’ve clicked leaves. You’ve made discoveries. You’ve hit dead ends. Is that all there is? This talk will introduce new and intermediate family history researchers to new resources as well as peek into the world of deeper genealogical research. We’ll touch upon working with archives and libraries, meeting the “locals” at your local societies, some practices to organize and stay on top of what you find, ways to share what you find with your family, and how growing a bonsai instead of an oak might save your sanity. Along the way, Novak will offer some great, often humorous, examples from her own research. Get ready for a fast-paced tour through your next steps in your genealogical research!

Audience: Beginner–Intermediate

Researching Your Revolutionary War Ancestors

Explore the resources available, online and off, for getting to know more about your Revolutionary War ancestors—and if they were from New Jersey, you may be in for some extra pleasant surprises. Michelle D. Novak will share her favorite sites and collections for researching records including Fold3/Ancestry, the National Archives, The David Library of the American Revolution, NJ State Archives, and the DAR Library in Washington DC.

Audience: Beginner–Intermediate+

Taming Transcription

Transcribing from original documents can unlock events, actions, and sentiments that haven't been expressed since they were first written—and may shed entirely new light on your ancestors' lives. Learning a manageable system for transcription can make the difference between enjoyment and chaos. In this session Michelle D. Novak will share a large transcription project currently underway, one that started with one NJ Supreme Court case involving an ancestor and that has now grown to dozens of individual and related case files (still with no end in sight). Using only scans saved to PDFs of the documents and MS Word, she has devised a **three-step process** to staying organized through rounds of transcription and proofreading. We'll also look at some technology tools (most free) that can help, and some ways to get you out of a bind.

Audience: Beginner–Intermediate

PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT TOPICS

Five Things Every Presenter Should Know about PowerPoint

PowerPoint, like all MS Office programs, is an incredibly powerful piece of software—if you know how the program was designed to be used. For many of us (Michelle D. Novak included) we learned how to use PowerPoint by trial and error, and usually on a tight deadline.

In this talk, Novak will show us five underused features of the program, including how to set up and use master slides and create custom color palettes, type styles, and slide layouts, and how understanding these important features can save you time and effort. We'll look at some of the helpful features in the program and where the program can be unforgiving and frustrating. We'll also look at some styles of presenting—and how you can tailor your presentation deck to one that best suits your personality and comfort level. Along the way, Novak will share a peek at some presentation decks she has created for CEOs and world leaders (really!).

Audience: Professionals

Five Things Every Genealogist Should Know How to Do in Word

Microsoft Word is an indispensable tool, but most of us learned how to use it—only by having to use it. Michelle D. Novak is a brand designer who regularly wrestles with the ins and outs of Word—on both Mac and PC—for client projects. Over the years she's learned how to control those image alignment annoyances, build advanced paragraph and character style sheets, build sophisticated templates that help speed her work, and has become a bit of a stickler on using the correct punctuation character. So, join us as we explore five tricks of the program that can help you with your every-day work.

Audience: Professionals

Historians are on Twitter; Genealogists are on Facebook

Let's look at what everyone is talking about—social media. In this talk we'll try and answer some of the most common, and confusing, questions, including: How does a blog differ from social media? Why should I care about Facebook? What type of information is best for each platform—and how do I know what is right for me? What is a social media plan and why must I have one?

We'll consider these issues as well as how you or your society can create a clear, engaging, and dynamic social media presence.

- Differences between a Blog and Social Media—and what personality type fits each best
- How is the dialog different between the two?
- How can the two be used in complement?
- What to avoid in both, and some professional pitfalls
- How to measure success
- What's a plan for your Social Media—and why you need one TODAY

Audience: Societies; Professionals

Societies—Why 'Us versus Them' is Doomed to Fail You Both

Few industries have seen as much upheaval as genealogy. What once was a niche hobby is now a multi-billion-dollar business—and it is poised to get much bigger. In its wake, too many Societies have been left scratching their heads about what to do next and how to find their audiences.

The good news is that it's never been easier to explain what you love to do. All those commercials and TV shows have bought genealogy to millions—and as a community, we need to ride this wave.

This presentation will endeavor to present a personal perspective from the inner workings of Societies. The mental roadblocks, organizational obstacle courses, and “little” thinking that's holding many Societies back.

Conversely, we'll look at some examples from Societies and companies that are moving the needle—and how we can hitch onto their momentum.

Audience: Societies

SELECT OUTLINES

OUTLINE—Organizing (and Staying Sane with) Your Genealogy

Note: This lecture has been presented as a 50 minute talk and a 1.5-2.0 hour workshop—which is much more in-depth on individual topics. Items in the workshop-only are shown in italics.

There are as many ways to organize genealogical information as ancestors in our family tree—and most find that they improve their methods as their records grow. Michelle D. Novak will explore organizational methods for digitizing, naming, and organizing your paper and digital files, discuss common technology pitfalls to avoid, and present ideas on to help your research live beyond today's technology. We'll draw inspiration from the past, set up common-sense systems, protect against "a matter of when" disasters, and find inspiring ways to share research with your family.

Outline:

1) Drawing Inspiration from the Past

When it all becomes “too much,” exploring traditional methods be an inspiring respite.

- Individual and family data sheets
- Timelines and checklists (Excel and paper)
- *Color-coded organizational systems*
- *Genealogical numbering system types*

2) Tackling Today with Common Sense

Whether your research is completely online or in file cabinets, the underlying organizing structure of your files *can* be similar for both. With common-sense approach to organizing your research you'll find things more easily, be able to stay more organized when your research is interrupted, and will leave a future-friendly set of files for those who inherit your research.

- Organic File Naming System—the “wedge” approach
- Living Folder Structure—the “sort” approach
- Digital Tools at Your Fingertips:
 - Scanning and Screen Grabs—What resolution is best (plus cheat-sheet)
 - Printing to PDF and Optical Character Recognition (OCR)—Super-charge your searching
 - *Batch file-renaming tools*

3) Planning for Tomorrow

We often lose sight of the simple fact that your family history research is your *family's history*—and if you're not involving your larger family with it, you're missing out on a great opportunity for its survival and continuation. This module will look at ways to protect and preserve your research, artifacts, and heirlooms and offers up some inspiration into turning your hard work into a family-friendly museum that you'll be proud to show-off.

- Digital Preservation—The importance of native file formats
- Backup Systems—The 3-2-1 Backup system
- Creating a “Family Museum”—Making your research family-friendly and fun for all
- *Archival preservation—New resources for preserving old things*

Audience: Beginners–Intermediate+

OUTLINE—Five Things Every Genealogist Should Know How to Do in Word

Microsoft Word is an indispensable tool, but most of us learned how to use it—only by having to use it. Michelle D. Novak is a brand designer who regularly wrestles with the ins and outs of Word—on both Mac and PC—for client projects. Over the years she's learned how to control those image alignment annoyances, build advanced paragraph and character style sheets, build sophisticated templates that help speed her work, and has become a bit of a stickler on using the correct punctuation character. So, join us as we explore five tricks of the program that can help you with your every-day work.

Outline:

1) Use your presets—edit Word's options to help speed your work

We'll explore some of the presets in Word—and how to get them out of the way. From stopping auto-corrects while making transcriptions to understanding how to Word will compress your images, these tips will save you time as well as headaches.

2) Master margins, headers and footers—and the different types of breaks

Bring more clarity to your work and understand the pros, and cons, of the different types of breaks.

3) Employ the correct character and punctuation

En-dashes, em-dashes, and diacriticals, oh my!

4) Create custom Paragraph and Character text styles (and avoid the built-in ones)

Word is not a typewriter. Many Societies all format their research in publications, professionally, in MS Word—and your work can look as great as theirs! In this module, we'll explore how to get at those style panels (not easily found), how to set up custom styles, and the benefits of taking the time to really explore this powerful functionality.



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5) Creating custom templates

Any MS Office document can be saved as a template. Your proposals, reports, worksheets, timelines, checklists can all be customized and saved as templates—ready to go for when you need them.

5.5) Footnotes, endnotes, and citation helpers

Keeping on top of footnotes and citations is never easy, but some of the built-ins can make it much less painful. This module will explore the built-in tools that Word has for creating sources and generating endnotes and inserting footnotes. While there is no plug-in for Evidence Explained (yet), a genealogist can get pretty close with these built-in tools.

Pulling it all together.

Throughout the presentation, we'll show how making some minor adjustments to the way you view Word can make a big impact in the professionalism of your work and organization of your materials. We'll also show how setting up templates can help speed your workflow.

Audience: Professionals

RETIRED TALKS (SPECIAL REQUEST)

Demystifying Ancestry.com

Click a leaf here, click a leaf there, is finding your family really that easy? Ancestry.com is an incredibly powerful research database and an indispensable tool for family historians. The site contains more than 10 billion records and 34 million trees—with more added every minute of the day. We'll get an introduction to this popular program, explore the strengths and hidden pitfalls, explore other ways of searching the site, and learn some genealogical best practices that will help keep you out of trouble! (And, if there's time, we'll also take a peek at what AncestryDNA looks like.) We will not be able to troubleshoot individual trees, but can answer general questions during the Q&A. No prior experience needed—except a love of family history.

Audience: Beginner–Intermediate

US National Archives 101

Michelle D. Novak will share the basics of using US National Archives (NARA) resources; where and why records are located where they are; and review NARA's digitization initiatives and partners—and specifically how to find NARA records that have been digitized by Ancestry and Fold3 and are now available online.

Audience: Beginner–Intermediate

Researching Your Civil War Ancestors

Did you ever wonder what's behind those Civil War index cards found on Fold3 or Ancestry? What do all those numbers mean? Explore some of the many exciting resources and repositories for getting to know more about your Civil War ancestors. Michelle D. Novak will share her favorite sites and collections for researching records and give you a peek at what the National Archives may have waiting for you. We will also review an exciting new collection of records, the Records of the US Sanitary Commission—a strange name for a vital organization that helped wounded soldiers, those killed in action, soldiers' families, war-scarred communities, and pensioners, widows, and dependents. For the past 100+ years, these records have been archived at the NYPL's manuscript division and were only recently name-indexed and opened to the public!

Audience: Beginner–Intermediate+

New and Overlooked Resources for Revolutionary and Civil War Research

Believe it or not, researching your Revolutionary and Civil War ancestors has just got a lot more interesting. In this talk, we'll look at some under-used resources at the State level, a whole new collection at the NYPL, and the digital changes happening at NARA—which brings more access at the same time that records are being retired to deep storage.

Audience: Beginner–Intermediate+