Custom Tags, Roles and Sentences

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(based on my Oct 2004 talk)

The recent TMG newsletter had an article: *"Producing a Publishable Article with TMG"* There has been discussion on whether or not genealogy software was capable of producing a real "narrative genealogy" as opposed to just a list of "compiled begats." Bob Velke, president of Wholly Genes, asserted that a researcher could use TMG to produce a journal article that, with minor modifications in a word processor, would meet the standards for such publication. Debbie Parker Wayne, a professional researcher, decided to tackle the question directly and offered a challenge to all software developers or their users to reproduce selected articles that were previously published in the NGS Quarterly. Terry Reigel and Gwen Pryor accepted the challenge on behalf of TMG. The results of Debbie Parker Wayne's project are published in the Sept/Oct 2008 edition of the e-magazine, "Digital Genealogist." There's little doubt that TMG outshined all of the competition by a wide margin!

Terry Reigel took one step further and published his specific results from the challenge, including side-by-side comparisons of his output with the original article by Elizabeth Shown Mills, CG, CGL. As demonstrated on his site, Terry used TMG to reproduce the text from the 22-page article _almost_exactly_ (including citations, introduction, conclusion, and elaborate narrative with historical context, etc.) and in the same sequence as the original. As Terry outlines in detail, there were a few minor exceptions in the text but not of the type that would disqualify it for publication. Most of his post-processing steps in the word processor were to match the specific formatting of the original publication. That is, in every substantive way, the content of the original article was faithfully reproduced. To see the full article by Debbie Wayne Parker in the Sept/Oct 2008 issue of "Digital Genealogist", please go to: http://www.digitalgenealogist.com

If you are planning to eventually write your family history, you can take advantage of TMG's sentences. Most tags have an associated sentence, which will be printed out in Narrative reports.

> *Screen: Sample Database #6 Annie Eliza Alexander*
> > *-show Tag, Sentence Box*
> > *-Display Individual Narrative Preview (zoom in?)*

But sometimes these are not quite what you want to say. What now?

The simplest method is simply to change the Sentence for that Tag
> *-Open Death tag*
> *-Click on Sentence*
> *-Click on Help, scroll to bottom, click on Variables, Close help*
> *-Change Died to was killed by falling off a horse*
> *-Display Individual Narrative Preview*

1. That works for a few tags. If you will be making the same change for many tags, you can make a global change. For example, let's assume that we found a graduation certificate for Annie:

   > *-Click Add Tag*
   > *-Select Graduation*
   > *-1890, Marion High School…Citation: #5*
   > *-Close*
   > *-Display Individual Narrative Preview*

   I'm not happy with this sentence. Let's go change it for all time

   > *-Click Add Tag*
   > *-Click on Graduation*
   > *-Click on Edit*
   > *-Roles and Sentences*
   > *-delete was and were*
   > *-Not happy: Rebuild all Sentences (but only until you Close)*
   > *-Repeat delete was and were*
   > *-OK, Close*
   > *-Display Individual Narrative Preview*

2. For example, Annie's husband John Keys Fugate died in 1922. Chances are that Annie was there at the time and was a witness to his death

   > *Screen: #42 John Keys Fugate*
   > > *-Open Death tag*
   > > *-Add Annie as Witness – Chose Witness Role*
   > > *-Note Sentence*

   > *Screen: Back to #6 Annie Eliza Alexander*
   > > *-show new Witness Tag for Death of John*
   > > *-Display Individual Narrative Preview: "witnessed the death"*

Now, in my opinion, we could have a better sentence than that:

> *Screen: Open Witness Tag Note that we can open the Tag from Annie's screen*
> > *- Double Click on Witness to Edit Witness*
> > *-Let's simply change the sentence to:..was left a widow by the death..*

> *-Close*
> *-Display Individual Narrative Preview*

3. You are probably aware that some of the sentences call up the Memo field. For example, the Occupation Tag. After John died Annie went to work as a store clerk:

> *Screen: Add Tag*
> *-Select Occupation Tag*
> *-Add Date (1925) Location and Citation*
> *-In Memo Field type: "a store clerk"*
> *-Click on Sentence – Note the inclusion of the Memo field [M]*
> *-Cancel, OK*
> *-Display Individual Narrative Preview*

4. You can also add a role to a tag. "Roles are used to record the specific nature of a person's participation in an event...Roles also can be used to provide a sentence `library' where you can chose a specific role solely to use an alternative sentence." Let's take a look at the standard Marriage Tag. It comes with four roles: Principal, Groom, Bride and Witness:

> Screen: *Click Add Tag*
> *-Click on Marriage*
> *-Click on Edit*
> *-Roles and Sentences*

> Let's add a role of Clergy

> *-New*
> *-Name of New Role: Clergy*
> *-Male Sentence Structure: copy Witness statement then change witnesses to performed and [W] to [R:Clergy]*
> *-OK, Close*
> *-Open Marriage Tag, Click on Witness and change Role to Clergy*
> *-Close*
> *-Go to Father*
> *-Display Individual Narrative Preview, Zoom to 2nd last para*

This would allow you to add multiple sentences for different roles. For example, you could have the best man, maid of honour, flower girl, etc.

5. Annie and John must have moved from Virginia to Tennessee between 1906 and 1922. If you check the list of tags, you find Immigration and Emigration tags but no Moved tag. In 'Getting the Most out of TMG', it cautions against getting Tag Happy: "Review the Standard Tag sentences and add Roles, and that may be a good choice." This may not be the best example, but if you have no choice, the simplest method is

to start with an existing Tag and copy it

> Screen: *Click Add Tag*
> > *-Click on Immigration*
> > *-Click on Copy*
> > *--Click on New Immigration1 Tag*
> > *-Click on Edit*
> > *-Roles and Sentences*
> > *-On General Screen type in:*
> > > *Label-Moved; Past tense: moved; Abbreviation: mov.*
> > *-On Roles and Sentences screen change Principal sentence to "moved" instead of" immigrated" and Witness sentence to "move" instead of "immigration"*
> > *-Other screen should be fine*
> > *-OK*
> > *-Select*
> > *-Complete Tag with Date place and Citation*
> > *-Change Role for Annie from* Principal *to* Moved
> > *-OK*
> > *-Display Individual Narrative Preview*

6. In Lee Hoffmann's book: "The most common reason to add a Custom Tag is to make a tag uniquely address a specific set of circumstances that occurs frequently in your data. You can write a sentence that is appropriate – write it once and forget it – and you can assign a label that distinguishes the event from other similar events." Adding a Custom Tag is very similar to the previous example except that you have a couple of other tasks to do on the General and Other Tabs.

Most of this information is on the Help screen:

The Tag Label appears in the left-most column of the Tag Box on the Person View
-Tag Groups have specific uses, and it can't be changed afterwards, so make sure you have the right group
-Each Tag Type can be designated as active or inactive. Inactive Tag Types are not displayed on the default version of the Tag Type List.
-Display Roles For:
> If Principal is checked, any roles designated for principals will be displayed as the first word in the Name/Place column on the Details Window of the Person View. If Witness is checked, any roles designated for witnesses will be displayed when the witness is the subject in the Details Window.

One of the other suggestions is to add Tags that don't ever print. One reason would be to store research notes for your own purposes. Another example is to make a list of other researchers for that individual. If you don't want the tag to print, don't leave the sentence blank; use the double exclusion marker "two dashes"

Note: Appendix B to Hoffmann's book lists all the Standard Tags with their sentences, so if you ever need to change one back after you have modified it, you can re-enter the data.

Sources:

1. Hoffmann, Lee H., editor, *Getting the Most Out of The Master Genealogist*. Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, Inc., 2003

2. Wholly Genes, Inc., *The Master Genealogist v5.x for Windows User Guide*. Columbia, MD: Wholly Genes, Inc., 2003

3. Wholly Genes, Inc., *The Master Genealogist v4.x for Windows Reference Guide*. Columbia, MD: Wholly Genes, Inc., 1999