

Using John Cardinal's Second Site with TMG

Ottawa TMG Users Group

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Do I have Second Sight? ... No, but I do have Second Site... (forgive the pun).

If you are a user of TMG then you would do well to make use of Second Site. It may not give you visions of the future, but it does give you a tremendous view of what your TMG raw data can look like when transformed into an actual or virtual web site.

Second Site is a programme created by John Cardinal, the creator of TMG Utility, a free (donorware) software programme that every TMG user should also download and use in conjunction with their TMG projects, for which it is expressly designed. John Cardinal is also wonderful about supporting his products: he actually responds personally to e-mail queries, and informs his customers whenever there is an update to correct bugs found in the programme. His web-site* contains detailed "how to" files, and he also maintains a Second Site Support list and a Second Site e-mail list, and offers a paid genealogy website hosting service.

* <http://www.johncardinal.com/ss/> Second Site can only be purchased online. See the [Wholly Genes](#) web store. The list price of Second Site is \$29.95 USD.

Second Site is so inexpensive that it is one of the best bargains available for use with TMG. The latter is of course very powerful and for its users it is arguably the best genealogy software available, but once you have entered all your family data and checked and re-checked your sources, added on your photos and audio and video files, then what?

Of course we all know that the end-product for which most family historians aim is a family record of some kind to be shared with family members and friends, and we have to decide what form that is to take. For many people it will be a book, self-produced or even commercially printed. For others, it will be a beautiful wall-chart illustrated with photos and maps or other images, such as those produced by Ottawa group members Douglas Hill and Norine Wolfe.

Second Site provides a simple but very effective means of sharing the data in electronic format, either by designing a web-site that can be shared publicly or privately via the internet. But SS also enables one to share the data as a virtual web-site on a CD: there is no need for any recipient to possess any genealogy software; all that is needed is a computer with a CD drive: once the CD is placed in the drive, the website automatically opens on the screen and one navigates through it as one would on the internet.

John Cardinal's SS is now in its second version, which is immensely more powerful and versatile than the first, and like TMG it is totally customizable, so your site can be as simple or as complex as you choose to make it, with no need to be familiar with web-site creation software such as Dreamweaver, and with next to no need for knowledge of HTML programming language, except in its simplest form, if one wishes.

Not only is it an excellent way of sharing data with family members in a format that requires no effort on their part, allowing family members to review your material and point out any errors or omissions, but SS is also immensely useful for checking and verifying your raw TMG data.

I often find that many errors I make in TMG (spelling, punctuation, etc.) go un-noticed, but because of the way in which SS generates the site, even the smallest errors can become glaringly evident, and hence can be quickly corrected in TMG. Especially noticeable are the ways in which place data is formatted, and how your memos and sources would look in an MS Word file or even an HTML file. And whereas one might have to print out scores of Journal reports to verify how one's charts and reports will look in print form, the SS generated site allows you to review your entire TMG project at one go.

It is also very fast: on average it takes about twenty minutes for me to generate a site from my large data base which now contains over 118,000 individuals, while a small project of about 3,000 individuals is done in about twenty seconds.

I shall attempt to give a practical demonstration of how easy it is to use SS, though as I have said, if you are adventurous you can go about creating a very elaborate web-site with as many bells and whistles as you care to add.

Before you begin it is wise to create a Documents folder named Second Site, in which you will save the files generated by the programme. Second Site automatically creates 2 folders, "i" (input) and the important one being named "o" for "output". The "i" folder is where you place items such as images that you want to appear on your home or welcome page. The "o" folder is the more important, as it is where you will find the files that you will later copy into your CD creation programme to make your virtual website on CD.

Another essential preliminary measure is to use Cardinal's free TMG Utility to re-size all your photo & text exhibits, limiting their size so that they do not appear as huge images not totally visible on the screen. You should save the re-sized images in a specific folder, and later direct SS to choose only the exhibits from that folder.

Using Second Site

The first step is to create a "Site Definition File" (sdf) for whichever TMG project you are working on; you must create a separate "sdf" file for each project. This is done by opening the File menu on the SS welcome page and clicking on "New" in the drop down menu. Choose a name for the file, preferably one that is related to the name of your project. Once you have saved it, the programme opens on the main screen, on which one then clicks on the "Set Database" button: this is where you choose your project (e.g. Bimtmg_PJC). And you are ready to roll.

Now one can begin to design the site, by clicking on the various items in the drop down menus, starting with Data, then moving on to Pages, Layouts, Stylesheets, and Strings (the latter can be ignored by the beginner).

Under Data, one can customize just what will be included or excluded, e.g., living persons, exhibits, sources, memos and so on as well as the formats for dates, and places. One can of course choose the language: SS supports English, French and most West European languages.

Under Pages, one can really begin to shape the way the site will look, by choosing titles and subtitles for the main page and for all pages.

Under Stylesheets, Styles, one chooses one of the themes for the appearance of the site, but these can be further customized by changing, fonts, colours and so on. It is most important to check the boxes under "Media" for "Add CD AutoRun Files" and "Create Gendex File", if one intends to create a site on CD.

The most important section is probably the "User items" as this is where one can choose the various types of Index one wishes, the Ancestor and Descendant charts, or whether to include a Photo Gallery. One can also create custom lists and charts, for example to highlight particular individuals or groups of persons in the project. Terry Reigel gives much very useful advice on using Second Site and on topics such as creating custom lists and charts. <http://tmg.reigelridge.com/SecondSite.htm> ("Using Second Site to share your TMG Data").

Once you have generated your site, you should save the file, then close the SS programme, and re-open TMG, which must be closed while SS is at work. You can then bring up your project on screen, next to the virtual site and begin comparing the data. I can assure you that the errors will leap out at you!

When you are satisfied with the look of your site (and there is much room for trial and error), you can of course post it on your internet home page [see web-pages of David Walker & Ron Chenier], or copy the

files from the output folder into your CD creation programme (I use Nero) to create your CD and distribute it as you see fit. Do try it! You won't regret it.