Board for Certification of Genealogists
Draft of Proposed New Standards for Public Comment

Considered within the context of
Genealogy Standards, 50th-Anniversary Edition,
by the Board for Certification of Genealogists

Proposal:

- One new general standard
- Modifications to three existing standards
- Five new DNA-specific standards for an added Chapter 7: Using Genetic Evidence

RECOMMENDATION FOR NEW GENERAL STANDARD

[suggested insertion point 10.5] Distinctions among familial relationships. Genealogists' research questions, plans, and written and oral discussions distinguish, as applicable, among adoptive, biological, and other kinds of familial relationships. [See glossary for definition of FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS.]

RECOMMENDATION FOR MODIFIED STANDARDS IN CURRENT *GENEALOGY STANDARDS*

Current Standard 2, p. 6

2. Specificity. Genealogists' citations connect one or more sources or information items with:

- Each statement the genealogist makes that is someone else's observation, deduction, or opinion
- Each fact that is not common knowledge
- Each image the genealogist shows of someone else's creation
- Each conclusion the genealogist establishes

The specificity of these connections leaves no question about the basis or source of each statement, fact, image, or conclusion. [See glossary for definitions of CONCLUSION, IMAGE, and INFORMATION.]

Proposed modified Standard 2

2. Specificity. Genealogists' citations connect one or more sources or information items with:

- Each statement the genealogist makes that is someone else's observation, deduction, or opinion
- Each fact that is not common knowledge
- Each image the genealogist shows of someone else's creation
- Each conclusion the genealogist establishes, including each generational linkage in an ancestral line

The specificity of these connections leaves no question about the basis or source of each statement, fact, image, or conclusion. [See glossary for definitions of ANCESTRAL LINE, CONCLUSION, GENERATIONAL LINKAGE, IMAGE, and INFORMATION.]

Current Standard 17, p. 14

17. Extent. Whether a genealogical question is simple or complex, the research plan aims for "reasonably exhaustive" research, required for genealogical proof. Thorough research gathers sufficient data to test—and to support or reject—hypotheses concerning identities, relationships, events, and situations. Acquiring sufficient data may require broadening the research beyond the person, family, event, or situation in question. Thorough research attempts to gather all reliable information potentially relevant to the research question, including evidence items conflicting or consistent with other evidence items. Thorough research, therefore, aims to consult all potentially relevant sources. It emphasizes original records containing primary information, which may be used as direct, indirect, or negative evidence. [See glossary for definitions of CONFLICTING EVIDENCE, DIRECT EVIDENCE, EVIDENCE, EXHAUSTIVE RESEARCH, INDIRECT EVIDENCE, INFORMATION, NEGATIVE EVIDENCE, ORIGINAL RECORD, PRIMARY INFORMATION, PROOF, REASONABLY EXHAUSTIVE RESEARCH, RECORD (NOUN), RELATIONSHIP, RESEARCH QUESTION, and SOURCE.]

Proposed modified Standard 17

17. Extent. Whether a genealogical question is simple or complex, the research plan aims for "reasonably exhaustive" research, required for genealogical proof. Thorough research gathers sufficient data to test—and to support or reject—hypotheses concerning identities, relationships, events, and situations. Acquiring sufficient data may require broadening the research beyond the person, family, event, or situation in question. Thorough research attempts to gather all reliable information potentially relevant to the research question,

including evidence items conflicting or consistent with other evidence items. Thorough research, therefore, aims to consult all potentially relevant sources, including DNA sources. It emphasizes original records containing primary information, which may be used as direct, indirect, or negative evidence. [See glossary for definitions of CONFLICTING EVIDENCE, DIRECT EVIDENCE, DNA SOURCES, EVIDENCE, EXHAUSTIVE RESEARCH, INDIRECT EVIDENCE, INFORMATION, NEGATIVE EVIDENCE, ORIGINAL RECORD, PRIMARY INFORMATION, PROOF, REASONABLY EXHAUSTIVE RESEARCH, RECORD (NOUN), RELATIONSHIP, RESEARCH QUESTION, and SOURCE.]

Current Standard 58, p. 35

58. Content. Assembled genealogical-research results discuss or show the information's reliability and its relevance to the research questions underlying the reported research. Discussions, figures, lists, tables, or a combination show how the evidence correlates. If evidence conflicts, the discussion explains how the genealogist resolved the conflict or why it could not be resolved. [See glossary for definitions of CONFLICTING EVIDENCE, CORRELATION, EVIDENCE, INFORMATION, RESEARCH QUESTION, and RESOLUTION.]

Proposed modified Standard 58

58. Data presentation. Genealogists choose various formats for clearly presenting assembled research results.

- Tables are ideal for numerical data, including genetic data.
- Genealogical charts are ideal for portraying hypothesized or proved relationships.
- Discussions, diagrams, lists, maps and plats, illustrations of various kinds, or combined formats also allow research results to show how evidence items correlate or conflict.
- Discussions, when evidence conflicts, explains how the genealogist resolved the conflict or why it could not be resolved. [See glossary for definitions of CONFLICTING EVIDENCE, CORRELATION, EVIDENCE, INFORMATION, NUMERICAL GENETIC DATA, RESEARCH QUESTION, and RESOLUTION.]

Chapter 7: Using Genetic Evidence

All work products reporting genealogical conclusions—including those using DNA evidence—should meet the Genealogical Proof Standard and all relevant standards. The following standards, specific to DNA, do not stand alone. They

are not the only standards that genealogists' work should meet. Cross-references identify the related existing, published standards.

1. **DNA testing is**:

    - **Selective.** Genealogists select DNA tests, testing companies, and analytical tools with potential to address the genealogical research question.

    - **Targeted.** Genealogists target test takers based on their DNA's potential to answer a genealogical research question.

    - **Sufficiently extensive.** Genealogists examine the test results of a sufficient number of test matches to draw conclusions about a relationship and to analyze and eliminate competing hypotheses about the relationship posed in the research question. Testing can involve any of at least three groups:

        a. Test takers descended from a hypothesized common ancestor through multiple lines of descent
        b. Test takers who descend from multiple possibilities for a common ancestor
        c. Test takers selected to distinguish among shared segments pointing to a common ancestor

    [See glossary for definitions of ANALYTICAL TOOLS, COMMON ANCESTOR, CONCLUSION, DNA, HYPOTHESIS, RESEARCH QUESTION, SHARED ANCESTRY ON MULTIPLE LINES, SHARED SEGMENTS, and TEST MATCHES.]

    [See related Standards 9, 11, 15, 17, and 19.]

2. **Using DNA test results.** Genealogists consider all available relevant factors when they use DNA test results as a component of proving a relationship. Those factors include reported and typical amounts of shared DNA, sizes and locations of chromosomal segments, information about mutations, markers or regions that have been tested, number and genealogical expanse of people who were tested, and genetic groups, including meaningful triangulated groups.

    Genealogists use valid tools and statistical algorithms from testing companies and third parties to interpret test results and establish

conclusions about relationships or their absence. They cautiously form conclusions about the absence of relationships. Genealogists do not use DNA evidence to suggest genetic relationships beyond theoretically possible levels. [See glossary for definitions of ALGORITHM, DNA TEST RESULTS, GENETIC GROUPS, GENETIC RELATIONSHIPS, MARKER, MUTATION, PROOF, REGIONS OF DNA, REPORTED AMOUNTS OF SHARED DNA, SEGMENT INFORMATION, STATISTICAL PREDICTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS, TRIANGULATED GROUPS, and TYPICAL AMOUNTS OF SHARED DNA.]

[See related Standards 12, 45, and 40.]

3. **Identifying shared ancestry of DNA matches.** Genealogists using autosomal DNA both report and accommodate the possibility of shared ancestry on multiple lines. The report addresses the accuracy, and depth of test-takers' pedigrees and assesses any gaps in those pedigrees. Genealogists accommodate gaps by selecting one or more strategies such as the following:

    - Further documentary research
    - Additional targeted testing
    - Clear explanation with justification for concluding that the gap is irrelevant to the research question
    - Segment triangulation
    - Analysis of data from clustering and genetic networks

    [See glossary for definitions of GENETIC NETWORK, PEDIGREE, SEGMENT TRIANGULATION, SHARED ANCESTRY, and SHARED ANCESTRY ON MULTIPLE LINES.]

    [See related Standards 17, 40, 42, and 45.]

4. **Replicability of DNA test results.** Genealogical reports of DNA test results enable others to assess their data and conclusions. [See glossary for definition of DNA TEST RESULTS.]

    [See related Standard 3b.]

5. **Integrating DNA and documentary evidence.** Genealogists use DNA test results in conjunction with reasonably exhaustive documentary research. They assess the merits and shortcomings of

both documentary and DNA evidence. They consider points of agreement and disagreement between and within documentary and DNA evidence. They use those assessments and comparisons to help resolve conflicts within their evidence, including conflicts within DNA evidence and between it and any documentary evidence. [See glossary for definitions of CONFLICTING EVIDENCE and DNA EVIDENCE.]

[See related Standards 17, 19, 47, 48, and 50.]