

Family Tree has replaced New FamilySearch? Are You Ready?

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Genealogy's Star

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Development of a database for storing personal genealogical information by FamilySearch began in 2001. The first Beta test of the new program took place in 2007. The New FamilySearch program was released in stages, first, only to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and later to selected individuals outside of the Church. Introduction of the New FamilySearch program was done in stages by LDS Temple District. By the end of 2009, most of the Church members had access to the program.

New FamilySearch was primarily designed as a method by which members of the Church could submit names of their deceased ancestors to the Temples of the Church so that proxy ordinance work could be performed. In this regard, the program worked very well, but due to number of duplicates in the file, there was a danger that the ordinance work would also be duplicated.

New.FamilySearch.org was originally seeded with data from five different sources; the Ancestral File, the International Genealogical Index, the Pedigree Resource File, Church membership records and Church Temple records. Unfortunately, combining all of these sources of information resulted in a monumental problem of duplicate information. Additionally, the program did not allow the users to change any of the information in the file and errors and duplicate information proliferated. Whenever a change was made to the file, the older, sometimes incorrect, information was preserved along with the correction. Some of the individuals in the file ended up with hundreds of duplicates.

Sometime after the initial introduction of New.FamilySearch.org, there was a discussion about the impact and problems with the New.FamilySearch.org website and development of a replacement program, to be called Family Tree, was started. Family Tree went to Beta test in 2011 and was introduced in substantial form at RootsTech 2012 in February of 2012.

At the time of its introduction, Family Tree was and has been a "live" program and not another Beta test. During 2012, the program evolved with the gradual addition of new features. It is very likely that the program will continue to evolve in the future. At some point, New.FamilySearch.org will be discontinued. Certain key features of the Family Tree program were not immediately released with the introduction of the program and it is anticipated that Family Tree will continue to

evolve over time with additional features being added over the next year. But as of the date of this Syllabus, the program is essentially complete with the major exception of the merge function.

Shortly after the introduction of Family Tree, documentation for the program was put online in the Help menu on FamilySearch.org. This is a list of some of the most current documentation (you may need to register and sign in to see all of the documentation):

- [See all Family Tree training materials \(manuals, videos, etc.\)](#)
- [Introduction to the Family Tree \(video\)](#)

Here is a list of the major differences between New.FamilySearch.org (NFS) and FamilySearch Family Tree (FT):

1. NFS did not allow users to edit the information in the database. If the information was inaccurate or improper, the user could, at first, mark the information as incorrect or dispute the information, but later when the dispute feature was discontinued, could only add another copy of the information with the correction. Both the correct and incorrect information would then remain in the file with no way for the user to know which of information was correct. In contrast, FT allows most of the data in the file to be edited by the users. However, FT retains a complete record of the changes and allows subsequent users to reverse the changes if they are inappropriate or wrong. FT also keeps a running list of every single change made to any individual's record.
2. Not only did NFS keep all of the variations of every item in every record, but it also preserved every separate contribution of every individual to the program. So, for example, if 100 different people contributed information about a certain person, then NFS had 100 copies of that individual in the file. NFS did provide a way to combine "duplicate" individuals but preserved all of the duplicates. FT takes a completely different view of differing information, only one copy of an individual of one copy of information needs to be preserved. Since any user can edit all of the information, there is no need to worry about preserving the duplicate information publically.
3. FT promises to be much easier to understand and much easier to maintain than NFS. Most of the actions in NFS took multiple steps and were very time consuming. These same actions in FT are much easier to understand and the lack of duplicate individuals makes the program conceptually easier to work with than NFS.

There are a number of questions that remain to be answered about FT, but initial impressions are that many if not most of the problems experienced with NFS will be resolved.