

Mentors – Project Evaluation

ROOTS Project evaluation summary - Mentors 2014

1. The project was:

Too easy 1
Just right..... 17
Too hard 0

2. The project was worth my time:

Yes 18
No 0

3. The project was enjoyable:

Yes 18
No 0

4. I plan to use the public library in the future when I need information and resources:

Yes 18
No 0

5. I learned some new things about genealogy research through the project:

Yes 18
No 0

6. I believe that I had enough resources and support from the project team in order to serve as a mentor:

Yes 18
No 0

7. The project should be repeated in the future:

Yes 18
No 0

8. I would be willing to participate in a similar project in the future:

Yes 17
No 1

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(In your own words)

What did you learn and experience from this project?

- I am a fairly experienced genealogist and history buff so I did not learn a lot from the training. However, for mentors who may not have all that experience, the “train the trainers” is essential; in particular so all mentors have the same information. And a review for us long-time researchers never hurts. I very much enjoyed getting to know the students. The bonding experience with them made the project rewarding for the mentors. I think the students enjoyed getting to know us and to learn from our “expertise”. The fact that these students had many challenges in their personal lives and still made the commitment to come each week and do the difficult work of research showed me that young folks can do genealogy. In fact, they had more living relatives than we “old folks.”
- How much I know already about doing research. Access to cultures that are not part of my family histories was a bonus. One of the highlights for me was the interview class - awesome!
- I learned a lot about doing research in Mexico, in addition to the complexities of doing Native American research. Being able to travel to the National Archives facility at Sand Point and getting an insight into the holdings there was valuable.
- Meeting with the next generation of people that will guide the nation in the future
- Students are interested in family history! They were eager to get involved in the “research” process, which I thought would be like pulling teeth. Much more detail about available hard resources than I knew were in Western WA. How difficult it was for some researchers to find information when family members were not eager to share, because of either cultural bias, or discoveries they didn’t want their children or grandchildren to know. Learned how to improve my own research techniques. Was amazed and appreciative of how many people were willing to attend workshops and volunteer their time to help the students learn. It was a huge commitment.
- I learned the importance of making sure I have sources for providing the correct information on the person I am researching. I learned valuable information on how to research.

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- The family culture of some of the students was so different from my experience; e.g. students' not living with their parents, having had little communication with family members, the challenges they had with schoolwork, while needing to work. Some had family obligations, such as having to miss school to care for younger siblings. The drive and determination to succeed with their education, in spite of these challenges, was inspiring. I also learned the challenges of not being able to find adequate records since many, of them were starting with parents, or possibly grandparents - all of whom were too young to be in the 1940 U.S. census, which is the starting point for most genealogists after talking to living family members. Many of them didn't have family knowledge of older generations to get them back to a time when more records were available. Of course, the problem with Mexican research was one which blindsided all of us. Since we knew about the Mexican heritage of some of the students and the Native American heritage of others ahead of time, it was wonderful to have some of the mentor training on those topics. I particularly enjoyed those sessions since I have had no experience in researching either of those ethnic groups before. The training lectures on Hispanic records were very good, but again, most of it was useful only for older generations; therefore, I'm not sure how much I was able to help those students. Fortunately Margie, with her amazing ability to adjust to the inevitable "bumps in the road," kept coming up with more ideas, such as the Skype session with the genealogist in Salt Lake City and the Hispanic records specialist at the National Archives in Seattle.
- I learned to explore different avenues of research with the students. Because of the difficulty in locating records, much of the emphasis focused on communication with family members rather than on online searches. For some of the students, this might have been the first time they had an opportunity to discuss family history with other members of their family. Coming from a different family experience, this was a bit of an eye opener for me. The field trip to Seattle provided us all with an opportunity to learn what resources were available outside the Burlington area. This was my first trip to the Seattle Public Library as well as to the Regional Archives building. I think we all wish that trip had been longer to provide more time for research. On a more personal level, I enjoyed my interaction with the students. I felt we had developed a bond similar to being a member of a family. When the students presented their final project, I was extremely proud of each and every one of them for their accomplishments. Within myself, I also realized I could again commit to a long term project. Since retiring 6 years ago, I have shied away from anything involving a set schedule but my passion for this project caused me to look forward to the weekly classes!

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- Even though I had little experience in Genealogy I really wanted to know more from when I myself was a teen. Helping & supporting young people was a pure joy to see them find their ancestors & become interested in the History surrounding each of the lives they found. I am so grateful to have learned the tools for perusing each of our ancestry, to be of support in growing future understanding in young people. The training means so much to me & it is a way I can give back to society. Margie Wilson & the whole team did a wonderful innovative job putting this program together. I, as an individual, am greatly inspired & would love to do it again. I know others who would also like to become part of a team if this expands. Thank You to the Paul Allen Foundation for funding for this incredible learning & growing opportunity.
- It was an outstanding Project from the beginning! We mentors were given a series of lessons from an experienced genealogist and teacher then he also gave our students classes. Margie Wilson, our writer of the grant, program creator, program organizer, director, leader, she researched and found excellent people to share their acting skills, giving us wonderful performances. True stories of our historic ancestors that developed our nation. Our students took an educational trip to one of our cemeteries and learned history about one of the first teachers that started the first school in Skagit County; along with many other individuals and family's members in their final resting place. The trip to the Seattle library's genealogy library and then the State archives at Sand Point, were amazing places for everyone to visit and for most of our students their first trip to Seattle. From beginning to end EVERYONE of us were thrilled to be involved in the program! I learned as much as our students. They were a delight! The adults became new friends.
- I learned of the vast amount of resources that contain family history. Especially the international databases that exist.
- I learned how to research someone's Mexican roots; I learned it is easy to "skype" an expert. I learned about Soundex which helps find names I couldn't find before. I learned that researching family backgrounds can give students a pride in themselves they didn't have before. It also, surprisingly, helps them connect with family members who may have been alienated from them (a reason to talk). I saw a girl desire to visit her grandfather on the Texas border to learn about family even though her own father would not give her any information.
- I once again found out how enjoyable teenagers can be if they are interested in a subject.
- A wonderful rapport between the students and mentors, even though there was for the most part a 2 generation gap in ages. Some of these students had some very difficult background experiences, yet all seemed to come with a smile on their faces and a willingness/eagerness to learn each week. I think it was a great match-up between Margie, Maggie and Linda that made this such a rewarding endeavor.

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- As a beginning genealogist I learned a lot about researching and documenting in the training classes. During the course with the students I learned more about NARA, searching for records from Mexico and researching Indian heritage.
- I became acquainted with the many genealogy, family history and local histories books and pamphlets residing in our libraries. I learned that some people might not want to open ALL of their family history and that's ok. I experienced much pride seeing our students reach their individual genealogy goals. They were so proud of their achievements, as they should be.
- I learned more about research skills, some new software, techniques and how to assist eager students in using tools to discover and prove findings. Students were eager to learn the tools and took pride in their ability to discover and prove their discoveries.
- What I learned, I already knew. If you provide a bridge for people of different ages and backgrounds and opportunity, they will do so. This project was billed as Teens with Seniors. These teens were looking for someone to listen to them and believe in them. The mentors I am proud to say accommodate them beautifully.

The best thing about the project was:

- The bonding with the students. Seeing their final projects was very rewarding to me. It showed how much effort they had put into their research.
- Working with the students. Getting a chance to meet the students and the teacher Linda. Also, how enthused the mentors are. Interesting at times, how much the mentors wanted to share their information to everyone at the beginning and then became more invested in the student's stories and histories.
- The best thing about the project was the interaction with the students. I think that both the mentors and the students grew in appreciation of each others' gifts and talents.
- To see a student light up when they found an ancestor. I can't express enough how important it was to receive the tools to do the research. I have special notes from all the classes that were available to me beforehand. My own notes & diagrams tell & remind me of plenty. I know it's a computer age but I am an Artist personality. Preparation is 99% of being able to pass it on to others. If I were to do it again I would want to go through a refresher course. I will continue to learn through S.G.S.
- The unexpected and very rewarding relationships that formed between students and mentors - from very early in the program. 2.)The students' energy and obvious enthusiasm for the subject and willingness to learn proper research techniques rather than depending on Google or Ancestry. It was wonderful to hear all of them express that in their final presentations.

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- I really enjoyed interacting with the other mentors and the students but watching the students grow in confidence and ability was the most pleasing aspect of this program for me. In the beginning, I think the students and mentors alike were a little hesitant about what to expect. Over a short period of time, however, we were all working together toward the same goal. It was a genuine team effort!
- Being with young people
- That there was something new every session, and the majority of the mentors participated and the students completed their projects well.
- The excellence of the program. The depth of learning about the reality of our pioneers lives. The friendships we built while working with the mentors, presenters and our students. Margie's brilliance in creating the total program! The presenters she located to perform for us and their wonderful talent, I can't praise the total project and the people involved enough! It was our favorite day of the week and it was such a pleasure to be there each time we gathered!
- Was seeing the response from the students as they began the search on their own individual roots.
- The motivation of the students participating in the program.
- the pride in their family that I saw each student develop and therefore, pride in themselves and what they could accomplish.
- My interactions with the teenagers and their interest in the subject of genealogy and their family.
- I truly believe we (students, mentors, teachers) all looked forward to being with each other and learning together. Having the first real class on Halloween at the Cemetery I think really bonded the students and mentors, and got the students involved in thinking about "Family" and "Relationships", and how times have changed with so many early deaths at such a young age as experienced in the residents of the cemetery.
- Watching the students learn and discover that they could do this too. Helping them along the way to find their information and prove, document and evaluate their sources.
- Seeing the enthusiasm grow in the students each week. They were really into this kind of history lesson. For them to be able to pull information needed from library books and send for vital records, receive them and hold actual document copies was so exciting for them. This whole process raised their confidence level so much. They beamed with pride during their presentations as they deserved. And, I teared-up with pride for them each Thursday night...pass the Kleenex.
- Being part of the students learning process and being able to assist them in their efforts.

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- The interaction between the Teens and the Seniors. The teens picked up on the maturity of the mentors. Besides the academic lessons they learned, the teens also learned to have confidence in themselves. They learned that they could work hard to achieve a stated goal. They learned how to search and research a topic as thorough as circumstances allowed them.

The worst part of the project was:

- The lack of information for Latino students to find on-line. But they overcame that brick wall and found many documents for their ancestors. Using the resources at FHL (Skype a genealogist) helped those students a great deal.
- A few of the presenters were not on track or not prepared. Lack of time working one-on-one with the students - limited class time.
- I don't think that there were any "worst" parts. There are some things that could be tweaked to make better use of the limited time available for instruction and research.
- The limited amount of time we had with the students. This was felt by students and mentors alike. The two research days were very helpful.
- I don't believe there was a 'worst' part of the project. The most difficult part, I believe, was the lack of ancestral records for those students with Native American and Mexican heritage. I found it both challenging and discouraging when trying to help those students. Prior to this project, I had never experienced such a lack of information.
- That it ended.
- ??? Nothing, It was well thought thru,
- I wasn't able to participate in the project as much as I wanted, because I was having a home built, was packing and moving.
- Having it over!
- For me was knowing how little information I had in the proper ways to do the searched.
- N/A
- Since we were assigned a different student each week, I did not really develop a true mentor/student relationship. Next time, I would definitely want to be assigned a certain student and truly help them and get to know them!

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- Nothing
- Finding out that there are REAL CHALLENGES in finding records from some other countries.
- Not enough time to do online research or computers were too slow.
- I think the worst part was our weekly “class” was so short in time. There was so much to fill our time slot that we barely had time to research at beginning.
- Not enough time to do research online with the students. More time working with them could improve their outcomes.
- There was just not enough time with the Teens. Just about time we got started, it was time for them to go. The only really successful time together was when a whole day, 6 hours was set ahead. Then some information was found on some of the families. The atmosphere was friendly, relaxed with no pressure. I think both the Teens and Seniors enjoyed the day.

What can the library/SVGS do to make this a better project for future students?

- Once the ethnicities of the students are learned, compile lists of possible sources. I felt the students had a lot of struggles to find documents from Mexico.
- Tighten up the beginning 2-3 weeks - seemed like we didn't make a lot of progress. More time to bounce ideas off each other and the mentors - having a brick wall class. The brick wall class for the students towards the end of the project would be good - or even earlier - just too find out where they are in locating information.
- I think that the library and SVGS did a great job.
- I don't know how feasible this would be, but perhaps some after school study sessions in the library with some of the mentors could be arranged I'm not sure this would work, though, since so many of the students have jobs. Other than that, I can't think of anything. Maggie and Karen were so engaged with the students, helping them with mailing birth/death certificates, and providing supplies for their projects.

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- The Burlington Library has one of the better genealogy sections of any library in Snohomish, Skagit, or Whatcom counties. That being said, I would like to see a little more emphasis on books or CDs concerning researching Mexican or Native American records. Certainly Maggie and Karen would know what is and isn't available along these lines. Obviously, the library staff has to consider how best to spend their available funds. As far as hosting the project and providing support, I don't see any way the Library and it's staff could improve! I was also pleased with the generous membership offer presented to the students by the SVGS.
- Take the information we have now & refine it. Even though I lost the last few class-es do to a back injury, it seemed things got bunched up at the end. Starting earlier on class projects would help. The students are bright & fast so less talk & more hands on. More computers would help.
- Don't use legacy!!! Use family Tree Maker,. It is easier to find people
- A good question, but I don't have any suggestions, because you provided space, resources, attended weekly sessions, and were supportive. You have a genealogy library sections, always had computer access, but now with the grant, certainly having the library addition of ancestry.com is a huge benefit. I am pleased that the students were encouraged to learn how to really research before resorting to "google" searches or going straight to ancestry.com and other search engines. I think you all did a terrific job and made the processes as fun as possible.
- To be honest I can think of anything I would change! The Library and SVGS, the mentors were all in harmony with each other. We had perfect guidance from everyone of our leaders. We knew who to speak with if we needed anything. The enthusiasm among everyone was excellent every week!!!
- Not sure.
- I think the library provided an excellent level of support and services.
- I think both the library and SVGS stepped up to the plate and did an excellent job!
- To ask the person who gave the beginning class to the mentors could be incorporated in the students' classes. I believe this may add some consistency to the lessons for the students.

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- I believe a lot of “kinks” were worked out as we progressed. IE: We did not need the computers set up for many of the early classes. We became flexible with the lesson plans and the school’s scheduling.
- Evaluate the vol. speakers (mentors) for their outline on a topic to be sure it fits the program. Some seniors are forgetful and have trouble speaking to a group.
- I do feel that the project needs to add at least one...maybe two...more “all-day research time” in the program. We had two in the pilot program. We really needed them, too, and the students started finding needed information with glee. I believe that future ROOTs projects should include two “all-day research days”.
- Library staff were great about providing resources and providing a learning environment.
- To expedite the training in the future, some of it should be done with both the mentors and the students in attendance. I thought doing the training before actually doing hands on genealogy was a good move. Let’s do it faster the next time.

Please share any other thoughts or comments you want to share about the project, the library, and/or the Skagit Valley Genealogical Society.

- The library and librarians were an integral part of this project. The funding to subscribe to databases, their expertise in history and on-line research; as well as the photocopying, supplies, and printing were essential to the success of the project. The co-operative partnership of the BPL, SkVGS, Friends of the Library, BE School District; as well as the grant funding from Paul G. Allen FF all contributed to a successful project. No one entity could have done this alone.
- I think being able to instill a curiosity about their family histories and how rewarding it can be to discover information about grandparent, etc., is what I feel the best about.

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- I think that the students were a little bored by some of the lectures, and they would have benefitted more by shorter lessons and more computer time or time out in the collection at the library. I also think that many of the students were frustrated by records that were in Mexico and difficult to obtain. Perhaps more information about researching an ancestral village or state - something like the county histories that many US counties have - would have helped them understand how their ancestors lived. If at all possible, it would be helpful for the mentors to know where the students are doing research before the actual research and lectures begin. I would have been happy to do some research on my own to find what sources might be available for a particular area. Without giving the students the information, we could lead them in the right direction. It just seemed that the students were the most engaged when they were doing the hands-on work. Overall, this was a great experience. I was really proud of how well-prepared the students were, both in the weekly meetings and during their final presentations. I hope that this project continues and spreads to other communities.
- This was such an incredible journey for me as a mentor, and the rest of the mentors seemed to feel the same way. Frankly, I cannot imagine another program having this type of success without a Margie, Maggie, Karen, Linda, this group of mentors - and above all, this amazing group of students. Kudos to all! Roots indeed rocks!
- I feel very fortunate to have been a part of such a unique experience. Margie, Maggie, Karen, and Linda put together an organized, well thought out, and well implemented program. I believe the program could work in other areas of the country with several modifications. We were lucky enough to have so many people in this area devoted to making it work. There seemed to be no subject for which a 'specialist in the field' could not be found. Whether by Skype or in person, these people shared their knowledge and time to help the students and to aid in the success of this program. Without the support of the SVGS membership, this program might not have succeeded. Most of the mentors are members of the SVGS and they have been acknowledged for their commitment and support which made the program such a success.

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- I am so pleased I was able to learn from everyone. You are all generous & caring mentors & I support you as your visioning is what causes new things to happen. Finding ways to nurture young people secures a bright new future for all of us. People are more than willing to help if they have the time. In the Retirement Community, there are many people with plenty of time & knowledge. It is a source for help with community projects. I am not one that is not involved & a lot of people like to stay vital. Press coverage really helps so keep using it. People read the paper & it needn't be Senior News. This is exciting stuff! Mentoring is a vital roll. I've had mentors all my life, so now it's my turn.
- I would like to know how you and your staff felt about the project. Did it meet your expectations? What kinds of resources, aids, other lessons do you think should have been introduced? Thank you to all of you at the library and to the SVGS mentors who were present every session day and contributed so much effort and encouragement. I would like to see this kind of education provided for even younger students who are eager to ask questions and would benefit early in their education knowing research techniques.
- Thank you to: THE PAUL ALLEN FAMILY FOUNDATION, MAGGIE BUCKHOLZ, DIRECTOR BURLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, KAREN PASSE REFERENCE LIBRARIAN BURLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY, LINDA LARRABEE TEACHER BURLINGTON NORTH HIGH SCHOOL Thank you to: MARGIE WILSON AND HER BRILLANT IDEA AND HER WISDOM TO DEVELOP HER VISION AND ABILITY TO CARRY IT THROUGH TO MAGNIFICENT SUCCESS AND HEART FELT APPRECIATION OF ALL OF WE MENTORS!
- After completing the project, I feel the next time around I would feel that I would be able to offer better assistance to the students. This was as much a learning experience for me as it was for the students.
- Considerable effort and time was given by Margie and the Library Staff which resulted in a good project that I feel could be utilized by others.
- This project was very worthwhile and I hope it takes off with other libraries and genealogy societies in the futures.
- If this project continues I do hope that their (the students) audio interviews can be digitized and returned to them. Seeing pictures of your ancestors is wonderful and help relieve the longing for that person. When you can hear that person's voice it fills your heart with love.
- This was an excellent educational opportunity for the students. It was challenging and required them to learn good skills in using data bases to find and verify information that will allow them to use computer resources in their future endeavors.

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- Someone suggested, I think one of the mentors, that the mentors purchase the same book the students were completing. For me, that was a waste of time. With my busy schedule, I quickly skipped lessons and got behind. I have a book that has hardly been opened. Some of the ideas along with some of the scheduling flopped. For example, recording personal histories of family members was a good idea but for one reason or another it didn't seem to work. Overall this project was a hit. As part of the evaluation, we should include that the Burlington Public Library and some mentors would be available to consult with other libraries and genealogy societies that want to try this program.