



Society Strategies

Federation of Genealogical Societies

P.O. Box 200940 Austin TX 78720-0940

Series Set I Number 29

August 2009

Set I Strategies for Societies

Delegate ABCs

by Jana Sloan Broglin, CG and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, FUGA

Supplemental Page

The Federation has appointed delegates from member societies whose responsibilities are to expedite communications between FGS and the societies. This paper outlines effective ways to carry out these duties.

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Delegate ABCs

by

Jana Sloan Broglin, CG and Sandra Hargreaves Luebking, FUGA

One of the many advantages a society enjoys when it joins the Federation of Genealogical Societies is that the society will be represented by a delegate. Each society, regardless of size, selects one delegate to be the interface between the society and the Federation. Some delegates are elected by a vote from the membership. Other delegates are appointed by the president or by the governing board. Individuals are encouraged to volunteer for election or appointment to this important role.

The delegate is the voice of the society. The delegate is familiar with the workings of his or her own society as well as the procedures and activities of the Federation. A delegate's duties are to:

1. Represent the society by attendance at the Federation's annual meeting which is held in conjunction with the FGS conference each year.
2. Express the views of the society to the Federation so as to aid FGS in its planning and decision making.
3. Relay news of Federation services, activities and projects to the society and clarify their importance.
4. Be available to assist with Federation projects and activities.
5. Vote in Federation elections and on issues, always voting the position of your society rather than a personal view.

There are many ways the delegate can heighten the visibility of his or her society. For example, submitting news of your organization's upcoming events to the FGS online calendar (instructions are at www.fgs.org/calendar) brings publicity to a national audience. And writing an article for *FORUM Online Magazine* or a notice for *The FGS Voice* about a successful project allows other groups to witness your achievement and provides them with a blueprint for a similar project.

FGS AS UMBRELLA

While the above serves to remind us of what a delegate can do, the question may be asked, what does an umbrella organization do?

The Federation of Genealogical Societies functions to address issues within the larger community that are too time-consuming or complex for single, smaller groups to undertake alone. An alliance of several societies reduces individual costs, risks, duplication of efforts and competitiveness. At the same time, a collective effort pools talents and resources.¹

To understand how an umbrella organization can be effective, consider the Civil War Project. At a national level, the Federation of Genealogical Societies mustered volunteers throughout the country to create the Civil

War Soldiers and Sailors System. Working over a period of several years, these volunteers² produced a database of more than 5.5 million names of those who fought for the Union or the Confederacy. The completed database offers free searches at <www.itd.nps.gov/cwss>.

THE WORLD ARCHIVES PROJECT

The Federation is now participating in another major indexing feat: The World Archives Project. In the fall of 2008, Ancestry.com launched this project which provides digitized records for volunteers to index. The resulting indexes are free for use by everyone. The current record group being indexed is *Returns from U.S. Military Posts, 1800-1916*, which is contained on 1550 rolls of microfilm.³

The returns include the names of company commanders, unit strength, men present, absent, sick, or on extra duty or daily duty, under arrest or in confinement, and significant remarks. They provide a census and history of posts throughout the country. There are hundreds of thousands, possibly millions, of personal names hidden in these records, along with identifying information perhaps not found elsewhere.

Each participating society will receive access to the entire database collection. The society will have its logo and a link to its website homepage on the collection or collections they index.

Participation in this Federation project will encourage other societies to join the effort. Working together, members of multiple organizations will index these historically-significant records and give the genealogy world yet another important research tool. For details on how this project works, visit <www.ancestry.com/worldarchivesproject>.⁴

BYLAWS REVIEW

Another FGS member benefit is the Bylaws Review. Societies may submit their bylaws for a non-binding review of their governing documents. Committee members who provide the review have worked on dozens of sets of bylaws, served as parliamentarians for genealogical and historical organizations and are

well-acquainted with the interpretations and ramifications of non-profit bylaw structure. Suggestions may be made regarding the arrangement of the articles, additions or deletions of articles and wording of the document.

FGS PERIODICALS

The Federation publishes two periodicals. One is designed for quick and easy delivery (via email or at the FGS website) and is aimed at the delegate and society officers. Formerly titled *Delegate Digest*, this publication is now known as the FGS *Voice*. This e-zine allows member societies to advertise events, promote society projects and keep informed of Federation events. Society delegates as well as officers and members may subscribe. Contact the editor at <www.fgsvoice@fgs.org>.

The second periodical is the FGS FORUM *Online Magazine*. FORUM is published quarterly for viewing by subscribers (discount to subscribers who belong to an FGS member society member). Two free subscriptions are given to each member society. One of these is for the delegate. FORUM features articles on methods and sources, book reviews, records access updates and news of exciting projects and developments in the field of genealogy. Each issue includes a calendar of society events and a list of member organizations.

THE ABCS

A – Awards. Societies are encouraged to recommend nominees for FGS awards. The awards are listed at <www.fgs.org/awards> along with their criteria and instructions for submitting names. A list of past award recipients is also at the website. Delegates can remind their societies of this opportunity to recognize valued people whose contributions have made a difference to the field of genealogy.

B – Build. Build a bridge between your society and the Federation. As delegate, it is important to let the society know what is going on with the Federation. At the same time, you can keep FGS informed about the activities of your society.

C – Communicate. Tell other societies about the Federation. The effectiveness of the Federation depends in large part upon the size of its membership. By sharing news of

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Federation benefits and activities, you will encourage non-member societies to join. This adds volume to the Federation voice and empowers even the smallest society in promoting favorable conditions for the pursuit of genealogy.

D – Delegate. Delegate of the Day and Delegate of the Conference offer exciting prospects. Did you know you can win a free registration for your society to the next FGS conference by entering the daily delegate drawing, in person, at the FGS annual conference?

E – E-zine. The e-zine publication of the Federation is The FGS *Voice*. The *Voice* is a free monthly newsletter available to readers throughout the genealogical community.

F – FGS FORUM Online. FORUM is the Federation's quarterly online publication that is available at no charge to delegates along with one copy to member organizations. Others can subscribe (there is a discount to subscribers who belong to FGS member societies).

G – Go. Go to conferences. Networking with the other delegates who attend the conference will generate ideas to take back to your society members and officers.

H – Help Preserve History. Encourage your society to donate one dollar per member per year to the Stern NARA Gift Fund managed by FGS. This fund, established in 1983, finances finding aids and the microfilming of valuable records held by the National Archives. *Canadian Border Crossings 1895-1954* is just one of the resulting collections available through National Archives regions and LDS Family History Centers.

I – Inform. Inform the Federation about your society's events, projects, issues and success stories.

J – Join. If you know of a society that does not belong to the Federation, encourage it to join.

K – Know. Know what the Federation can do for your society. From reviews of bylaws to discounts on publications, from Society Hall to the *Society Strategy Series*, FGS services and products are designed to help your society be a stronger organization.

L – Learn. Learn from other delegates who can offer innovative ways to revitalize your society. Do this by attending the Society Management Track at the FGS national conference---four or more presentations designed for delegates and society officers.

M – Membership. Membership to the Federation is available to genealogical and historical societies and libraries and archives worldwide. Dues are based on the size of the member society. A society with 6,000 members will pay a different fee than will a society of sixty members. There are special rates for libraries and archives.⁵

N – New? If you're just learning about the Federation and the delegate responsibilities, you are in for lots of new ideas to benefit your society,

O – Officers. Federation officers and board members conduct the business of the Federation and chair or serve on committees. Officers are elected for two-year terms, board members serve three-year terms. Officer and board candidates may be nominated by member organizations for (1) consideration by the nominating committee or (2) placement on the slate. Automatic placement on the slate occurs when the member society nomination is accompanied by the written consent of the nominee and the signed endorsement of five (5) delegates from other societies. All submissions must include brief biographical and contact information for the nominee.

P – Publications. Member societies receive discounts on the publications offered by the Federation, such as the FGS *Bylaws Workbook*.⁶ Delegates are encouraged to submit ideas for future publication projects to the Federation.

Q – Questions. Do you have questions regarding the running or establishment of a society? Contact <www.fgs.org> and we'll help you.

R – RPAC. The Records Preservation and Access Committee is a joint committee on which FGS serves with the National Genealogical Society, the Association of Professional Genealogists and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies. The committee's *White Paper – Open Access to Public Records: A Genealogical Perspective* (2009) may be downloaded at no charge. As a delegate, you are encouraged to become a state liaison or

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to submit information about pending legislation or other access issues in your state or local area. Visit <www.fgs.org/rpac>.

S – Society Hall and Society Corner. The Federation sponsors two opportunities for a society to increase their visibility at little or no cost. Society Hall Online provides a free link from the FGS website to the home pages of individual societies. Society Corner is an unstaffed display area with free space for member organizations to lay out brochures or other materials at the FGS annual conference.

T – The Society Strategies Series. Brief and succinct, these four-page papers are designed to help in all areas of society management. Topics are wide-ranging---from officers' duties, to obtaining non-profit status, to presenting successful multi-track conferences.

U – Umbrella. The Federation is an umbrella organization serving nearly 600 member societies. FGS maintains an active collective voice at the national level to help promote decisions and activities that strengthen and benefit genealogical research throughout the country.

V – Vote. Delegates vote for FGS officers and board members. Full biographical information on each candidate accompanies the annual ballot which is sent directly to delegates. Your vote is needed to elect the best candidates who will serve and represent your society at the national level.

W – Wednesday. Wednesday is the day traditionally devoted to society management at each FGS conference. Special workshops and lectures, the delegate luncheon and the annual meeting offer great ways to view different aspects of running a society. Wednesday is an opportunity to exchange ideas with society management experts and to discover techniques and strategies that have worked for other society officers. Wednesday will give you many ideas and practices to carry back to your society.

X – Exercise. ...make that *Exercise*. As a delegate you will be able to exercise your voice and vote concerning issues of vital importance to the genealogical community, such as the preservation and availability of historical records at all levels of government.

Y – You. You play the single most important role in the Federation. You are the voice of your society to FGS, and you are the voice of FGS to your society.

Z – Zest. As you approach your role as delegate to the Federation of Genealogical Societies, do so with zest and vigor. Activism and enthusiasm promote positive change and progress. Our common goal is to create a better environment for genealogical research in the United States and beyond. Will you join us as a delegate to help make this happen?

THE AUTHORS

Jana Sloan Broglin is Vice-President of Membership for FGS. Sandra Hargreaves Luebking is editor for the FGS *FORUM Online Magazine*.

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ENDNOTES

1. Luebking, Sandra Hargreaves. *Management Handbook: A Guide for the Organization and Management of Genealogical Societies*. 2000 Edition. (Austin Texas: Federation of Genealogical Societies, 2000), pages 39-40.
2. Volunteers used software designed for this massive project by the Genealogical Society of Utah and the GSU Data Processing Center.
3. National Archives Microfilm Publication M617.
4. "Military Posts and Outposts: The Hiding Places of Millions" by Loretto Dennis Szucs, FGS Director. *FORUM Online* 21:2 (Summer 2009).
5. Libraries, archives, and other repositories are invited to join the Federation but the special institution rate does not include the privilege of delegate representation.
6. Lindley, Marcia S., compiler. *Bylaws Workbook: A Handbook for New & Established Societies*. Available from FGS-Publications, P.O. Box 200940, Austin, TX 78720-0940; or <www.fgs.org>.