

# Family History Programs



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**PAF** (Personal Ancestral File) – free for download at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

PAF is no longer being developed by the LDS Church since family history resources are being used in other much more critical areas. PAF is not directly compatible with New FamilySearch (NFS). If you want to add information from your PAF file to NFS, you must create a GEDCom file first and upload it; to get information from NFS, you must add it to your PAF file manually. In order for PAF to directly communicate with NFS, it is necessary to get an add-on or helper program such as Family Insight.

It has been recommended by the Church Family History Department that we consider using one of the good, inexpensive programs available from several genealogical software companies. Most of these companies are run by LDS members who have collaborated with the Church in the development of their programs. They all have full LDS compatibility and are or will be able to communicate with New FamilySearch.

If you are currently using PAF, it is adequate for your needs, and you don't want to get a new program, you can continue to use it despite its limitations. If you feel the need for a more powerful program or you are just beginning, you might be better advised to investigate a different program. Several of the more popular ones are briefly described below in addition to Family Insight.

## **Programs that are (or will be) compatible with NFS:**

### **Family Insight** (<http://www.ohanasoftware.com>)

Produced by Ohana Software, this is not a stand-alone program. It must be used in conjunction with PAF. It adds a link to it's functions through the Tools menu in PAF, providing additional cleanup options for your PAF file and the ability to sync with NFS. Ohana offers a free 60 day trial to try the program. If you decide to purchase it, the cost is \$25.00 for the download version or \$35.00 for a CD. This includes one year of free updates. At that time, you must purchase a yearly \$15.00 update license to continue to download updates to the program as they are produced.

### **Ancestral Quest** (<http://www.ancquest.com>)

AQ is from Incline Software, which is the company that actually developed the Windows version of PAF for the Church, so the screens have the same format as PAF. You can use it like Family Insight as a helper program for your PAF file, or you can convert your PAF file to an AQ file, which gives added features. Tutorial videos showing how to use the program are available on the AQ website.

You can download a free trial that will be functional for 60 days to see if you like the program. After 60 days, the program reverts to a read-only version that still shows what you added during the 60 days but you can't add any more information to the file unless you purchase a license. The download cost is \$29.95, or \$34.95 if you want the package mailed to you.

Special features include the ability to create a website to collaborate with family members. Each person must have a copy of AQ, but group members can use a “check out/check in” system to make additions or changes to the file that is stored on the Internet. All members of the group can see any changes.

AQ will also run from a flash drive so you can take your program and file with you when you are away from your computer. All you need is access to a computer that has a USB port – no need for the program to be installed on that computer.

### **RootsMagic** (<http://www.rootsmagic.com>)

RootsMagic is another good program that provides a free trial version. The trial version allows you to try out the program as long as you wish, but it puts a limitation on the amount of information you can enter. If you like the program and wish to purchase it, the cost is \$29.95 for either download or CD. You can also purchase a manual for an additional \$14.95. RootsMagic also offers several different bundles containing additional family history programs, some of which integrate with RootsMagic.

RootsMagic offers full, easy collaboration with NFS. There are online training tutorials to show how to use the features, which include the ability to reserve temple ordinances and print Family Ordinance Requests. It also offers a helper feature for assisting someone else with NFS.

RootsMagic also has the ability run from a thumb drive so you can take your files and program with you. The program is updated regularly and all updates for the same version number are free.

### **Legacy Family Tree** (<http://www.legacyfamilytree.com>)

The standard version is free to download and use forever. Even the free version has **many** more features than PAF. These include tagging options, 97 different reports, and Intellishare, which facilitates easy sharing of files. If you find that you like the program and would like to “unlock” the advanced features, you would then pay \$29.95 to receive a customer code to convert it to the deluxe version. If you want a manual and CD mailed to you rather than the download, the cost is \$39.95.

Legacy has also recently received its certification from the Family History Department to work with NFS, but the update that will allow that capability has not yet been released at this writing. The update promises to be free and will add complete NFS functionality to both the free standard version and the deluxe version. Legacy is also working on a “to-go” version that will run on a thumb drive.

One of Legacy's most unique features is its research guidance. (deluxe version only) It will analyze your file and help you decide what to look for next, as well as tell you where to look for it. It also offers a separate charting module which produces some very nice reports and charts – both small and very large. Another nice feature is the ability to add various timelines (world events, etc.) into a chronology report for your ancestor.

Legacy also offers online training videos that cover all the basic features as well as the research guidance feature. More advance training video CDs can be purchased from the Legacy website.

### **Not Compatible with NFS:**

#### **FamilyTreeMaker** (<http://www.familytreemaker.com>)

Although I was unable to find any mention of plans to add NFS compatibility to FTM, is a very nice full-featured program that is available from Ancestry.com at a cost of \$29.95. This program is a good choice if you are an Ancestry.com user since it has a lot of integration with the website. It automatically searches the Ancestry.com website for information or documents that it thinks might refer to your ancestor, and a “shaky leaf” that you can click on appears next to your ancestor's name if something is found. FTM will merge the information into your file if you deem it to be a match.

I was not able to find an offer for a free trial, but there are quite a few resources available on their website to see what the program looks like and how it works. They occasionally offer free shipping as a promotion. FTM is very visually appealing and easy to navigate. It offers mapping features, some very nice reports and charts, and training tutorials on its website. Version 2010 has just been released.