

Ultimate Splitting of Sources for Better GEDCOM from RootsMagic

Background

This is a follow-up to [Source Templates, A Comparative Example](#) which demonstrated some problems that RootsMagic 5 (unchanged as of ver 6) has with outputting sources created on most built-in and custom source templates in certain outputs. In particular, there are anomalies in the GEDCOM export. The conclusion of the study was that it is best to store sources in the Free Form or similar format if exporting is important, among other reasons, and to use the more complex templates only to aid in the drafting of the source citation. A number of enhancements have been proposed for RootsMagic that would alter that conclusion but we know of no commitment to develop them.

Alternative Strategy

Since the study in Winter 2011/12 and as a result of Jerry Bryan's [Adventures in Extreme Splitting](#), an alternative strategy has been devised that results in the export of full replicas of footnotes to standard GEDCOM from any source template. It is described and the SQLite scripts are available at [Sources - Adventures in Extreme Splitting](#).

The strategy is based on the process that RootsMagic uses to export citations to standard GEDCOM:

- The footnote sentence is exported to the GEDCOM TITL tag, populated with field values from the Master Source, sans values and dependent text from the Source Details fields.
- The Source Details fields' values are exported to the PAGE tag, separated by semi-colons.

By moving the Source Details fields to the Master Source, the complete footnote sentence is outputted to the TITL tag while the PAGE tag receives nothing. Provided that the receiving software does nothing untoward with the GEDCOM data, the result will be citations in its outputs that are identical (save perhaps for formatting) with footnotes or endnotes in RootsMagic reports and websites.

Implementation

As simple as it sounds, the strategy is quite complex to implement as will be seen in the [script](#). The procedures create new custom source templates and many new master sources, as many as there are unique citations. Media and webtags must not be lost.

Here are before and after screenshots of the RootsMagic Edit Source window on a citation example from the parent study:

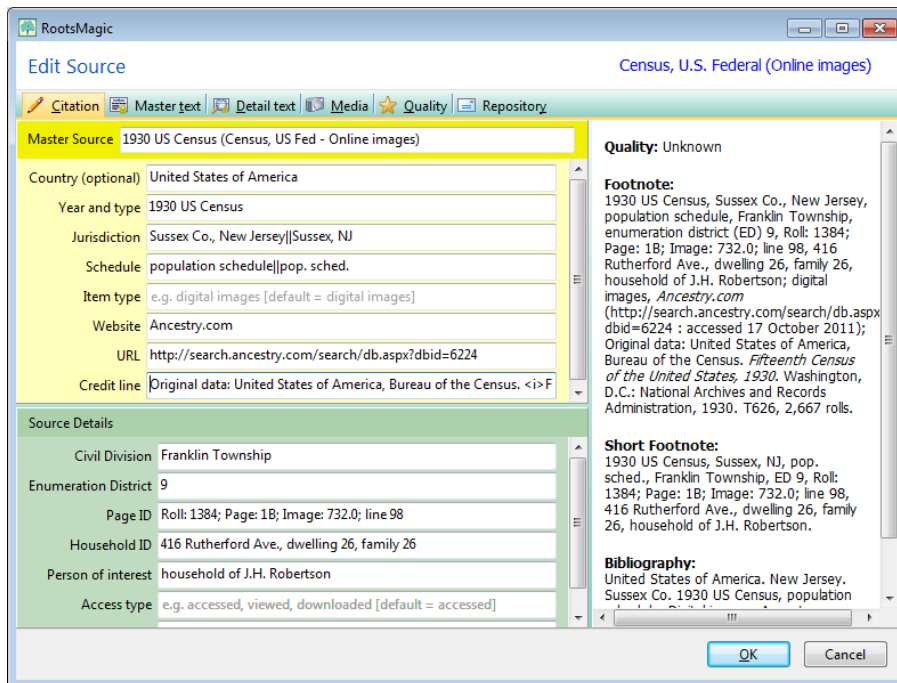


Figure 1. A citation using a built-in “lumpy” source template.

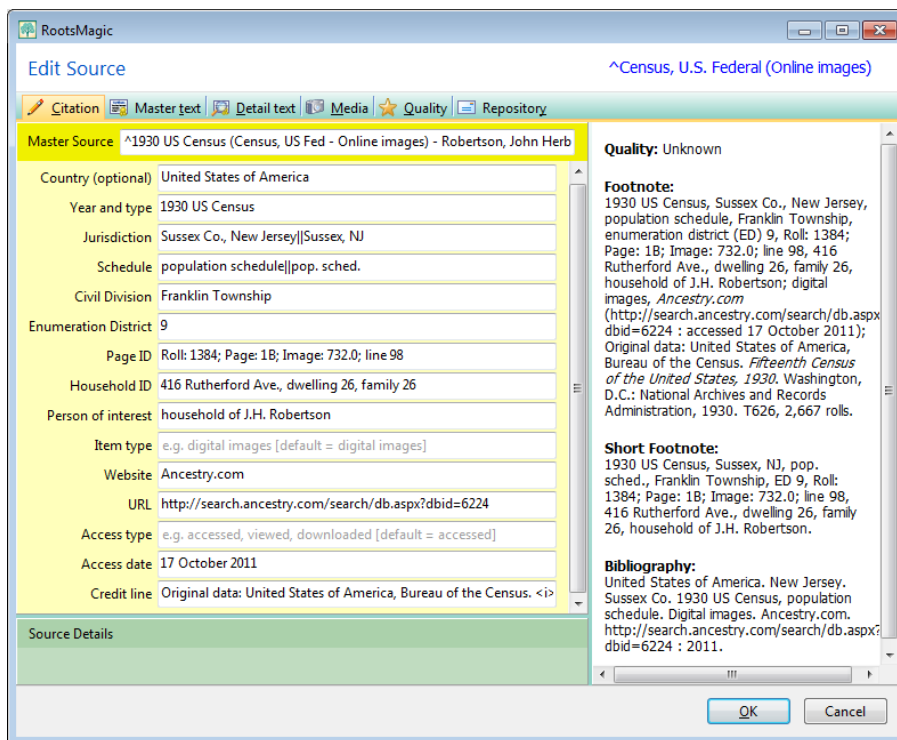


Figure 2. Citation converted to an ultimately split Master Source.

Comparison of GEDCOM Exports

The standard “lumpy” source and the ultimately split source as exported to GEDCOM are shown below. For reference, they are followed by the footnote/endnote that both output identically in RootsMagic reports. To make it easy to read, the GEDCOM TITL and TAG values have been extracted and concatenated as they would be by an ideal import and output from some third party software.

Master Source fields’ values are highlighted in yellow, Source Details values in green, while punctuation and text added by the footnote sentence template are left un-highlighted. The bold titles are the Master Source names which are exported to the GEDCOM ABBR tag for a source.

From Standard Template

1930 US Census (Census, US Fed - Online images)

1930 US Census, Sussex Co., New Jersey, population schedule, , , ; digital images, Ancestry.com (http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=6224 : accessed); Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. T626, 2,667 rolls. Franklin Township; 9; Roll: 1384; Page: 1B; Image: 732.0; line 98; 416 Rutherford Ave., dwelling 26, family 26; household of J.H. Robertson; 17 October 2011

From Standard Template Converted to Ultimate Split

^1930 US Census (Census, US Fed - Online images) - Robertson, John Herbert (Residence (family)) Hobson, Clara Amanda

1930 US Census, Sussex Co., New Jersey, population schedule, Franklin Township, enumeration district (ED) 9, Roll: 1384; Page: 1B; Image: 732.0; line 98, 416 Rutherford Ave., dwelling 26, family 26, household of J.H. Robertson; digital images, Ancestry.com (http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=6224 : accessed 17 October 2011); Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. T626, 2,667 rolls.

Report Footnote from Standard Template

1930 US Census, Sussex Co., New Jersey, population schedule, Franklin Township, enumeration district (ED) 9, Roll: 1384; Page: 1B; Image: 732.0; line 98, 416 Rutherford Ave., dwelling 26, family 26, household of J.H. Robertson; digital images, Ancestry.com (http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=6224 : accessed 17 October 2011); Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930.* Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. T626, 2,667 rolls.

Note that the report footnote from the ultimately-split template is identical to that of the standard template but the highlighting would be all yellow.

From the above, it is readily apparent that the export from the standard template has these problems:

- Extraneous punctuation between “population schedule” and “digital images”
- Loss of text “enumeration district (ED)”
- Disconnect of “accessed” and “17 October 2011”
- Questionable order

On the other hand, apart from the loss of formatting, the citation exported from the ultimately split source is identical to that of the footnote.

Conclusions

Ultimate splitting of sources:

1. Corrects the problem with exports from non-free form templates.
2. Makes GEDCOM citations very consistent with the other outputs of footnotes/endnotes from RootsMagic.
3. Allows sources to be stored under built-in and custom templates and batch-converted prior to export.

Recommendations

1. Use whatever source templates and split levels suit your needs in your working database.
2. Follow these steps for most faithful export of citations:
 - a. Prior to export, make a copy of your database.
 - b. Do the ultimate splitting on the copy of the database and delete the lumped sources.
 - c. Export from the ultimately split database.
 - d. Delete the ultimately split database
3. Push RootsMagic to improve its export of sources from non-Free-Form source templates so that you won't have to do ultimate splitting prior to export.