

WELCOME the HRE August 2017 Newsletter

We apologise for the long gap between Newsletters, but several non-HRE issues have interrupted the information flow.

The style of HRE Newsletters has now changed to a number of short articles.

OVERVIEW

In the last few months, we have carefully reviewed the design of HRE to ensure the revised specification properly achieves the initial HRE objectives. In that process we have found a number of common changes that we can simplify the HRE internals. At the same time, the identification of commonality enables HRE to have more flexibility. The User gets the benefit of this flexibility. This approach requires less code to be built and maintained within HRE.

During this review process, we have identified a number of Open Source packages that can be embedded within HRE to perform useful actions. This reduces the extent of code that has to be built from scratch for HRE.

Within HRE, the core Development Team is currently testing a number of these Open Source modules. It is vitally important that HRE is efficient, flexible and easily to maintained. We don't want to waste contributors' time by rewriting code because of inadequate evaluation before adoption.

HRE Progress – another milestone reached!

During April, HRE went live on GitHub – the world's leading software development platform and version control repository. Together with an outline of the HRE projects aims, we've also loaded what amounts to almost the complete specifications for HRE up to version 0.3, and a bit beyond.

This comprises over 130 architectural and application specification documents so the full scope of HRE's design is visible to developers. You'll find us at <https://github.com/History-Research-Environment/HRE--History-Research-Environment>

Subsequently, during June many of those documents were upgraded with more detail.

Volunteer Call

Newsletter and Mailing List Management

Our intention is to improve the quality and frequency of HRE News by use of a more sophisticated mailout tool to advise all on our mailing list of the availability of a new newsletter.

The person responsible will manage the Mailing List and send out HRE Newsletter messages via an HRE email address (not their own email address). As we now have a regular schedule for HRE News, with one update per quarter or more often as needed, the commitment is sporadic and once well organised should not be overly time-consuming.. Anybody interested in helping out should send an email to Paquita Lamacraft (paquita.lamacraft@archerbg.com)

Volunteer Call

Contributor Liaison

In order to effectively combine the contributions from volunteer code contributors, we need a person who can manage, acknowledge contributions, respond to, or forward queries to a person with the appropriate knowledge. We are looking for someone coming from a technology or service provision background, with good organisational and communication skills. Prior knowledge of TMG is not a requirement. The person will

send messages out via an HRE email address (not their own email address). If you can assist us please send an email to [Don Ferguson](mailto:Don.Ferguson@internode.on.net)).

Dates in HRE

1. HRE will import TMG dates with the same qualifiers for date ranges with the expected sorting and comparison. NOTE: “Before” and “After” qualifiers: these will NOT include the boundary date in their range. This is a minor change that agrees with normal use of these prepositions. TMG includes the boundary value when sorting and comparison.
2. Julian calendar date conversion to the Gregorian calendar for comparison values will be Location Dependent (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_calendar#From_Julian_to_Gregorian)
The start of the year can be set to be Location-Dependent, unlike TMG single global setting for old-style dates. (Other calendar conversions can be included.)
3. HRE dates have extended time precision to one second (if required)
4. HRE dates will include BCE (Before Christian Era) dates to -99,999 years.

TMG Canberra weekend – April 2017

In early April HRE Board members Robin Lamacraft and Don Ferguson travelled to Canberra, Australia (at their own expense!) to attend a ‘TMG Weekend’ - an annual event hosted by the combined Canberra and Sydney TMG User Groups. They presented HRE’s aims and directions and conducted a brief survey of attendees’ thoughts on which elements of TMG they regarded as good (and bad) and what they thought were requirements for any TMG replacement.

[More details of the survey are at the end of this newsletter for those who are interested.]

Genetic data related to children

In response to changes in reproductive medicine, including the use of egg donors and sperm donors, surrogate birth mothers, and mitochondria exchange, the marking of single male and female parent is no longer sufficient. HRE provides separate primary settings for these to be recorded and provides separate primary markers for each of: sperm source male, egg source female, birth mother, and auxiliary mitochondria female. In normal births, the biological father will be by default marked as the sperm donor and the biological birth mother will be by default marked the primary egg donor and mitochondria supplier.

Selecting Biological, Legal, and Social parents

Some people have significant adults in their lives who may need to be recorded for their familial function rather than biological connection. For some reporting purposes it is very important that the appropriate parenting person is selected. HRE provides for more than one person to be a “parent”. This overcomes the problem of children with same sex parents and for those whose biological parent is known but where the function of parent was performed by an unrelated party.

Import and Export of definitions

Definitions (such as tag types, source types, name styles and screen layouts, etc) can be exported to an XML file. That file can be imported into another project. This enables interchange of definitions between users.

Creating timelines from already entered events

In HRE, a Timeline is a list of Events or Tasks. Each Timeline has a unique name so it can be selected for inclusion in a display or report. Imported TMG timelines will retain their original TMG name, and be converted into this form. To create a new Timeline within HRE, a user creates a Head Entity with a user-provided unique name. Users may then select from already entered Events or Tasks as an entry in this timeline. Hence Timeline entries can have Citations and Sources.

Specific Queries or suggestions about the HRE design

If you have any query or suggestion about any aspect of HRE’s design please send an email to Robin Lamacraft robin.lamacraft@internode.on.net

More on the TMG Canberra weekend

Attendees were dedicated users of TMG (on average, since about 1999) and their use included both a One-Name Study and a One-Place Study, as well as one person who had modified TMG tags extensively to create an extended research tracking capability. He explained that the TMG Research Log did not have sufficient flexibility to record the type of detail that he needed. He could see that the HRE Task objects and their tags would be a much more appropriate solution to his needs.

Comments from the audience about TMG’s features were very much as Don and Robin expected based on feedback we have previously gathered. The list of desirable functions in a TMG replacement showed a strong emphasis on features to capture, analyse, and report on DNA tests. The following table shows a summary of the desired items, and their relationship to current HRE design.

Features considered desirable additions to TMG	Current HRE design approach
DNA –be able to run a report of DNA matches – who has been added, who has a confirmed common ancestor, who is a DNA match, who they match to, and be able to mark these with a symbol, both on screen and in reports/charts (from 4 attendees)	HRE designers had recognised that DNA data has become very important in family history research. We will consult with knowledgeable DNA researchers to identify the tools and reports that will improve DNA research analysis outcomes.
List of people report for DNA – matrilineal/patrilineal filter (from 2 attendees)	
Ability to handle DNA advances and their impact on research	
Intuitive, easy to navigate – not sub-sub-sub menus	Embedded in HRE design philosophy. Most of these functionalities are in the early development stages. Some features like charts can only be added when all required elements are functional.
Some TMG users enter non-persons to record history of places, etc. There was a desire to be able to use the HRE to collect these non-persons into separate research types with appropriate specialized features	
Ability to handle non-persons	
Compatibility – easy transfer of data into the new program	
Client-server – data shared with another user	
‘Index’ views like pick lists/focus groups, etc	
Backup to multiple destinations	
Good charts & reports	
Tags & Flags capability	
Ability to handle research tasks (general & non-person related) in a more integrated manner	
Plugins, especially to allow incorporation of new DNA data types and methods for other forms of genetic comparisons	Functionality to be implemented via plugins. These depend on demand and the availability of suitable implementers.
Ability to sync laptop with updates done on computer	
HTML output like SecondSite – customisable	
Ability to link with Ancestry/FMP etc for possible hints	
Provision of GenSmarts capability	