Schultz, who is the genealogy librarian at the Midwest Genealogy Center in Independence, Missouri, is seeing increasing numbers of people not only wondering about their family histories, but doing something about it.

“I think the growing interest in genealogy research will continue for many years, in large part because of the Baby Boomer generation,” she explains. “Baby Boomers are moving into the age when people tend to become more interested in their family history. They will not only have more interest in their family history, but they also will have the time to explore their interests.”

“Boomers” spark new life in genealogy research.
For a genealogy researcher, the fact that Baby Boomers are driving new demand is good news. According to Schultz, there is another piece of good news—the electronic resources available to her and her patrons are expanding to meet the growing demand for fast, efficient, and high-quality genealogy research.

Schultz believes that ProQuest Historical Newspapers™ and other ProQuest genealogy resources, such as HeritageQuest® Online and Digital Sanborn Maps™, are leading the way in the expansion of genealogy research capabilities. ProQuest’s online resources play an integral role in the services of the Midwest Genealogy Center, a nationally known resource center that draws people with an interest in genealogy from across the country and beyond. A part of the Mid-Continent Public Library, the Midwest Genealogy Center opened a new, 52,000 square foot facility in 2008 to better meet the growing interest in genealogy research.

ProQuest Historical Newspapers illuminate social context of the past.
“We try to provide a lot of research aids for our patrons,” Schultz says, adding that several ProQuest resources have proven extremely valuable in helping people expand the scope of their genealogy research. “We are trying to get people to use resources that are not genealogical, per se, so they can put their family history into a broader social context. Toward that end, we use ProQuest Historical Newspapers a lot because it helps our patrons look beyond the basic facts about their ancestors.”

“By helping people see what was happening in society when their parents and grandparents were living, giving them a deeper understanding of their family history,” she says.
In this regard, Schultz can speak from personal experience. She used ProQuest Historical Newspapers to help her in preparing a book about her great grandfather who emigrated from Norway to Quincy, Michigan. “In writing the book, I wanted more information about a 1927 accident at the copper mine in Quincy that took the life of my great uncle,” she says. “There was nobody living who could provide direct information, so I needed an alternative source.” Since access to local newspapers of the time would only be possible if she traveled to Michigan, Schultz wanted a more efficient alternative.

Ancestor’s mining accident uncovered.

“One day I was teaching a class about our remote resources and decided to do a live search on the Quincy accident using ProQuest Historical Newspapers,” Schultz explains. She found stories in the Chicago Tribune, The New York Times, and the Los Angeles Times. “These articles gave me the details on the accident that I wanted for the book,” she says. “The Los Angeles Times article even mentioned my great uncle’s name.”

Schultz used ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps to show a visual of relationship between where her grandparents lived and where her grandfather worked. “On the day of the accident, my aunt, who was in kindergarten at the time, came home for lunch and was sent to the coal yard where my grandfather worked to inform him of the accident. Through use of the Digital Sanborn Maps, I was able to illustrate an important part of this family story.”

Making the search process easy and productive.

Schultz says the depth of the content in ProQuest’s genealogy resources is impressive, but content isn’t the only reason she views the resources as indispensable in her personal and professional genealogy research. She finds the functional capabilities impressive, too.

“The ease of the search process is very beneficial,” she says. “With ProQuest, you have a good optical character reader, so when you type in the words you want to search on, you get just the useful positive hits. With other resources, you get a lot of irrelevant hits that slow down the research process.”

“The quality of the images is also very good,” she says. “And, I like the fact that the search results appear in a PDF that is easy to grab and print.”

The remote access capabilities of ProQuest Historical Newspapers and other ProQuest digital resources are another significant advantage, according to Schultz. “Part of our mission at the Midwest Genealogy Center is to make genealogy research easier to do,” she says. Library card holders can use these databases remotely. If they can’t get to the library in person, they can work on their family history at home. “The number of people using the remote access feature is very high and growing,” Schultz says. “People love it when they can stay home and still work on their genealogy project.”

Schultz is confident that demand for ProQuest products will grow, as well. “ProQuest does an excellent job researching and developing products before they launch them,” she says. “Some companies will launch a product before it’s ready for the public. But when ProQuest launches a product, you can be sure it’s well researched and well tested. You can be confident it will work well.”

“ProQuest has always been a good ally of libraries,” she says. “They ask librarians what they need and then build their new products based on that information.” The Mid-Continent Public Library has been using the HeritageQuest Online product since it was first launched and a number of other ProQuest resources for an equally long time.

For more information about ProQuest Historical Newspapers, other resources for genealogy research, or to sign up for a FREE TRIAL, call 800-521-0600, email pqsales@proquest.com; or visit www.proquest.com today.