Family History Metadata Working Group Gordon Clarke Interim Board

Chair FHMWGroup@gmail.com **FOR IMMEDIATE**

RELEASE

The Family History Metadata Working Group (FHMWG) Announces their Formation and Launch at RootsTech

Salt Lake City, UT April 15, 2020 – The Family History Metadata Working Group (FHMWG) announces their formation and launch. FHMWG is a public initiative for family history technology companies that will help organize and provide standards to create shared industry best practices for digital preservation. The official launch date was Thursday, February 27, 2020 at the RootsTech Conference in Salt Lake City, UT.

FHMWG seeks to help develop metadata standards to "keep your family memories alive." To do this, the working group is looking to enhance the value of digital media about people by refining the process and capability for embedding metadata directly into the digital media. Metadata includes critical information about media such as its contents, creation date, creators, and copyrights. The initial focus of the FHMWG will be on key metadata areas cherished by family historians such as names, dates, locations, events, and captions.

"Many people may still remember and cherish the handwritten notes on photographs that our grandparents scribbled to preserve our family traditions. Who would ever think to erase those notes and letters from our past? I think most people would be disappointed to know that is what usually happens to their digital photos today" says Dr. Robert Friedman, Executive Director of the Permanent Legacy Foundation, one of the founding members of the FHMWG.

Digital preservation is a growing field of interest for private industry and an area of concern for historians and researchers today. As the digital age enters a period of maturity and digital technology has saturated modern life, immediate action is needed to ensure that information captured today persists for generations to come. Although images are being captured and preserved by billions of people online, their full potential to preserve memories for future generations remains unrealized without contextualizing metadata.

In the era of born-digital media – content captured on phones, cameras and other devices – basic information about the time, date, location, and device is recorded but rarely does information about the scene or the people depicted make its way into that file. Worse still, when that file is uploaded to a digital platform, it is all too often stripped away of its metadata. When

descriptions, dates, and tags are added on most commercial platforms, that information is saved to the platform operators database and not to the media itself. When files are downloaded are moved between platforms, the data does not travel with the files, resulting in the loss of the owner's hard work and critical historical information.

"FHMWG founding members like Vivid-Pix and MemoryWeb provide solutions that already embed metadata. We joined this initiative because we see that by establishing standards the Family History community will be able to improve the seamless transfer of information between our and other solutions for our shared customers." said Rick Voight, CEO of Vivid-Pix.

The FHMW will produce guidelines for technology platforms that wish to enable the consistent capturing, sharing, interoperability and preservation of family history metadata. The FHMWG believes partner organizations can achieve this goal through effective planning, standardization, and frequent communications with archives, libraries, history organizations, standards bodies, commercial vendors and websites in order to establish, adopt, and promote this metadata.

The FHMWG is a collaboration between public organizations and private companies that include founding members from FamilySearch, MemoryWeb, Vivid-Pix, the Family History Information Standards Organisation and The Permanent Legacy Foundation. Simultaneous with the launch of the FHMWG is an invitation to expand the working group membership. Interested parties can contact the working group via FHMWGroup@gmail.com

The working group selected RootsTech 2020 as the venue for its public launch because of the event's role as the premier family history technology conference in North America, hosted by FamilySearch and presented by prestigious partners such as Ancestry and MyHeritage.