Family Treemaker 7.0
A software package designed to allow users to record, organize and publish genealogical information. This software is used primarily for recreational purposes and the audience consists of mostly novice computer users.

Breakdown: I bought this program to enter and organize data collected concerning my family genealogy. When entering genealogical data the source where the information was found is a highly important component of the research and reporting process.

- When I entered this interface I expected that there would be a visible and prominent feature that would allow me to easily access and enter source information.
- I searched the interface initially thinking that the source information would be entered under the “more” button. It was not.
- I then searched the icons at the top of the interface going through them one-by-one looking for the screen to enter source info.
- Finally, I ended up going to the help menu where it informed me that the command stroke CtrlS would bring up the source entry screen.

- I then entered source information. Often source information is identical for multiple pieces of information, such as birth and death dates and I wanted to repeat the same source information for another fact.
- I could not figure out a way to copy the citation information other than copying and pasting each line individually, one at a time.
- I tried using the find master source button, but it only allowed me to choose the title of the source, not the citation information.
- Each citation had to be individually typed or cut and pasted line by line.
Finally, after entering source information, I returned to the primary interface screen.

I expected that there would be numerals to indicate that source information had been entered. For example: Died: October 23, 1705¹ ². The superscript numbers (1 and 2) indicating sources.

There was no visual indication that source information had been added.

While this software program offers a high degree of utility it suffers from several usability problems. These problems fall into the categories of learnability for novices, memorability for casual users, and efficiency of use for experts.

**Learnability:** For the novice user this software is difficult to learn and use to its full potential because a key component of recording genealogical research is left off the interface. While the program offers the source entry function it is not visible; it is hidden from sight. The new user must search the interface and use the help menu in order to find the source input screen, or more likely, never know of its existence. The addition of a button for entry of source information would be a visual cue to the novice user that the function exists. With a click of the button the entry screen would appear for genealogists to enter source information.

**Memorability:** This program is primarily used by hobbyists and therefore is often used sporadically. Because of this memorability becomes an important issue in the design of the interface. With no visual indicator of the source input function it would likely be forgotten. There is nothing on the interface to remind the user of the source function or how to access it. In a redesign of the program a button could be added to the interface next to each of the primary information fields for the inclusion of source information. The suggested button would not only increase learnability but memorability as well. This would allow easy and immediate access to the source entry screen. Example:

**Efficiency:** For the more experienced user easy and efficient access to source information is of great importance. The ability to look at the interface and see which pieces of information are sourced and by how many sources would increase efficiency. In this program there is no visual cue as to whether source information has been entered and there is no direct access to each source. Currently, in order to see sources, the user must go to the source input screen and tab through each source. Efficiency of use is decreased because there is no easy and obvious access to source information that has already been entered. The addition of numbers representing the hidden source information would allow immediate visual confirmation (feedback) of the presence of source information. The numbers could be hyperlinks that would draw up the source when the number is clicked. This would allow quick and easy review of source information and increase efficiency. Example:
A second breakdown in efficiency occurs because citation information cannot be copied for different facts with the same source. The copy and paste function does not work because the information is in a number of fields. Efficiency could be increased by the ability to copy citation information, save it in a file similar those listed under “find master source” button, and use it for multiple entries.