Organizing your family research findings
(paper copies)

There is no "best" way – just what works well for you!

Options:

- By surname
- By family unit – this is Amy's preferred method for most records
- By family line
- By event type (births, deaths, census,…)
- By location

See

http://genealogy.about.com/cs/organization/a/filing_systems.htm

http://www.cyndislist.com/organizing/filing/

Organizing: By family unit
Amy's possibly wacky method

- 3-ring binders with groups of papers in sheet protectors. Can color code binders by line.

- Each binder may have multiple related families. For example, one binder section for a "root" family, and other sections in the binder for their parents (with siblings), grandparents (with siblings), …

- Cover of binder (preferably with see-through slot for a paper) has partial pedigree chart showing how the binder's "root" family fits with families in other binders. Further detail on pedigree chart or an ahnentafel report might be just inside front cover.

- Maps and other info that is relevant to multiple family units in the binder are next, before the sections for the individual families

- Typically I start a new family section when my ancestor child leaves their parents (marry or move away for good). Records for their siblings stay with the parents.

- Generally chronologically within subsections

Organizing: By family unit
Amy's general ordering
within a family unit binder section

1. Multiple generation descendant list
   - extends as many generations as needed to cover information I have on descendants of SIBLINGS of my ancestor child.
2. A checklist for what you do/don't have on this family might be useful here
3. Pre-marriage records after the parents left their parents' homes for good (if any)
4. Marriage info with photos if available
5. Death/burial/obituary info of parents in this family
6. Photos of the family that include the parents
7. Censuses or other records that include the parents in this family - chronological
8. Separate subsections for each child – in birth order (more details on the next slide)

Organizing: By family unit
Amy's general ordering
within a family unit binder section

8. Separate subsections for each child – in birth order

   - Birth record

   - Photos

   - If child is direct ancestor:

     - Records & photos for the child before they leave parents for good – chronologically ordered
     - Reference to separate section for further info

   - If child is sibling of direct ancestor:

     - ALL records for that child using same ordering system as use for other families
     - Possibly include descendant list if have info on many descendants
     - I will typically put the info on siblings of my ancestors in the minimum number of page protectors as needed

Please let us know what organizational methods work well for you!