Using Social Media for Genealogy

Finding People, Stories, Resources and Community Beyond the Family Tree

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Social media can be much more than a place to share updates. For genealogists, it offers opportunities to find distant relatives, discover historical photographs, learn about records, connect with experts, and exchange knowledge with other researchers.

The key is to choose the platform that fits your purpose. Social media complements traditional genealogical research; it does not replace original records, reliable sources, or careful analysis.

Four Platforms, Four Different Strengths

Facebook — Community and conversation

Facebook is particularly useful for genealogy groups, surname and locality research, research questions, event announcements, and discussions. Genealogical societies can use it to keep members connected between meetings, share resources, and invite people to participate.

Instagram — Visual storytelling

Instagram is well suited to historical photographs, maps, documents, postcards, cemetery images, and short research stories. A carousel can turn one discovery into a series of images: the mystery, the evidence, the research process, and the result. A final question can invite others to contribute.

TikTok — Discovery and short-form stories

TikTok can introduce genealogy to people who are not already researching their family history. Short videos work well when they begin with a question, mystery, surprising discovery, or practical research tip. You do not need to dance or follow every trend. A document, photograph, family story, or cemetery visit can be the starting point.

YouTube — Learning and in-depth content

YouTube is valuable for tutorials, lectures, interviews, research methods, and longer family stories. For genealogical societies, recorded talks can remain useful long after an event has ended.

One Discovery, Different Approaches

Imagine finding your great-grandfather's 1910 immigration record.

- **Facebook:** Ask a question and invite others to share their research experience.
- **Instagram:** Tell the story through photographs, document details, and a short explanation.
- **TikTok:** Open with the mystery or the moment of discovery and tell the story in a short video.
- **YouTube:** Explain the research process in a longer tutorial.

The research is the same, but the way you present it changes with the platform.

Social Media for Genealogical Societies

Societies do not need to use every platform. Start with your goals and your available time.

Facebook can support an existing community. Instagram can make historical material and member stories more visible. TikTok can introduce genealogy to new and younger audiences. YouTube can preserve educational content and make lectures accessible to a wider audience.

One activity can generate several pieces of content. A lecture announcement can become a Facebook post, a historical image can become an Instagram story, a short research tip can become a video, and the recorded lecture can be shared on YouTube.

Opportunities and Risks

Social media can help you discover people, records, photographs, local knowledge, and new research ideas. It can also connect societies with people who have not yet discovered genealogy.

However, popularity is not proof of accuracy. Always check claims against reliable sources and original records whenever possible.

Protect the privacy of living relatives, especially when sharing DNA information, family conflicts, children's photographs, or sensitive stories. Respect copyright and obtain permission where necessary. A photograph being available online does not automatically mean it is free to reuse.

Remember that social media algorithms are designed to attract attention, not to guarantee historical accuracy. Genealogical standards still matter: identify the source, assess the evidence, and distinguish facts from assumptions.

Getting Started

You do not need four accounts or a daily posting schedule.

1. Choose one platform that fits your goal.
2. Follow ten useful genealogy accounts, archives, libraries, or societies.
3. Observe how they share information and interact with their communities.
4. Ask questions, comment thoughtfully, and share useful discoveries.
5. Start creating content when you feel comfortable.

You do not have to become an influencer. You can simply use social media as another tool in your genealogical toolbox.

Your family tree is not the end of the story.

Social media can help you find people, places, stories, records—and sometimes each other.

Sources and Further Reading

Social media use and demographics

Pew Research Center — Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States
Current survey data on social media use by age group, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The figures cited in the presentation are from the 2025 survey.
https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/

Genealogy on social media

FamilySearch — Engage With the FamilySearch Community on Social Media
An introduction to how FamilySearch uses Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for community engagement, family history stories, and education.
https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/engage-with-the-familysearch-community-on-social-media

Family Tree Magazine — Best Social Media for Genealogy
Examples and ideas for finding genealogy-related accounts and using social media for family history.
https://familytreemagazine.com/websites/best-social-media-for-genealogy/

David Rumsey Map Collection
An extensive collection of historical maps and images—an excellent source of inspiration for visual genealogy and historical storytelling.
https://www.davidrumsey.com/

TikTok and short-form genealogy

Daniel Loftus — Genealogy and Irish history
https://linktr.ee/danielloftus

The Formidable Genealogist — Jen Shaffer
Professional genealogy and short-form educational content.
https://www.theformidablegenealogist.com/

My Grandma's Diaries
Family history storytelling based on a grandmother's diaries.
https://shows.acast.com/my-grandmas-diaries

TikTok platform guidance

TikTok Support — For You feed
An explanation of how the For You feed recommends content based on viewer interactions and other signals.
https://support.tiktok.com/en/getting-started/for-you/test-for-you

A genealogical society using multiple platforms

CompGen — Verein für Computergenealogie
Explore the association's projects and its use of digital communication to support genealogical research.
https://www.compgen.de/

Links and platform features may change over time. Always verify current account names and content before relying on them as research sources.

Follow your speaker on social media

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/DieWeltenVerbinden

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/dieweltenverbinden/

TikTok: @ConnectingTheWorlds

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/@barbaraschmidt8204

Pinterest: https://de.pinterest.com/connextheworlds/