

AI Assisted Genealogy

By: Daniel Horowitz - Daniel@MyHeritage.com - Tweeter: [@MyHChiefGen](https://twitter.com/MyHChiefGen)

Instagram: [horowitz_daniel](https://www.instagram.com/horowitz_daniel) - <http://www.SearchingForMyRoots.com>

Introduction

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is a field of computer science that creates systems that can do tasks that typically require human intelligence. Think of it as a computer program that can "learn" and "reason" from large amounts of data, rather than just following a set of pre-written rules. The science of making machines think like humans, simulating intelligence processes by a computer with the power to process large amounts of data, recognize patterns, make decisions, and judge like humans.

For genealogists, AI acts like a super-fast, tireless research assistant that can handle tasks that would be difficult or take a lot of time for a person to do. It can automatically **match records** by looking for patterns in large databases, even if names or dates are slightly misspelled, helping you find potential ancestors you might have missed. AI tools can also **read and transcribe old handwritten documents** that are hard to decipher, making the information searchable and easy to use. Some AI programs can even restore and **enhance old family photos**, fixing damage, adding color, or identifying faces, bringing your ancestors' images to life. Essentially, AI takes on the more tedious and complex tasks of research, allowing you to focus on analyzing the information and building your family story.

According to Lisa Lisson of "[Are You My Cousin? Genealogy](#)": "Working with AI is as having a conversation with a genealogy colleague who needs clear context to help you. The quality of information you receive directly correlates to the quality of your prompts. A vague request yields vague answers, while a strategic prompt delivers actionable insights."

Steve Little, AI Program Director for the [National Genealogical Society](#) (<https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/>) and founder of [AI Genealogy Insights](#) (<https://aigenealogyinsights.com/author/digitalarchivist/>), emphasizes the importance of using *intentional* prompts with chatbots. He argues the best way to learn how to prompt is simple trial-and-error, but effective prompts tend to have five recurring elements:

1. **Role:** Encourage the bot to "think" like a certain kind of person. e.g., *"Acting as a genealogist..."*
2. **Goal:** Clearly state what you're trying to accomplish. e.g., *"Your goal is to collect information from a probate record..."*
3. **Text:** Provide what specific dataset. This limits the scope of your inquiry and hopefully prevents the bot from reporting irrelevant or "made up" details. Most chatbots accept uploads of files.
4. **Task:** Tell the bot exactly what you want it to do. Be explicit and break down any complex tasks into distinct steps. e.g., *"Extract names of the deceased's family from the document, then alphabetize them..."*

5. **Results:** How and where to put its response in? In a list, table, image, spreadsheet or audio file

Terminology

- [generative AI](https://www.huit.harvard.edu/ai) (<https://www.huit.harvard.edu/ai>)
- Prompt
- Gems & GPTs

OpenAI's

There are thousands of different platforms that use AI. You can find a very long list of them at the website [Theres An AI For That](https://theresanaiforthat.com/) (<https://theresanaiforthat.com/>) but the most common and famous are:

- [ChatGPT](https://chatgpt.com/) (<https://chatgpt.com/>)
- [Claude](https://claude.ai/) (<https://claude.ai/>)
- Google's [Gemini](https://gemini.google.com/app) (<https://gemini.google.com/app>)
- Microsoft's [Copilot](https://copilot.microsoft.com/) (<https://copilot.microsoft.com/>)
- [Perplexity AI](https://www.perplexity.ai/) (<https://www.perplexity.ai/>)
- X's [Grok](https://x.ai/) (<https://x.ai/>)
- FamilySearch's [AI Research Assistant](https://www.familysearch.org/en/match/ade/aiassistant) (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/match/ade/aiassistant>)
- IGRA [AI Chatbot](https://genealogy.org.il/contact/) (<https://genealogy.org.il/contact/>)

Guiding Principles for Responsible AI in Genealogy as state by the Coalition for Responsible AI in Genealogy (<https://craigen.org/>)

These principles aim to guide the responsible use of AI within the genealogical community—including casual and professional researchers, societies, and supporting companies. The [responsible use](#) of AI will maximize its benefits while mitigating risks to the quality and trustworthiness of the work it generates.

Accuracy

AI can generate [false, biased](#), or incorrect content. Therefore, members of the genealogical community verify the accuracy of the information with other records and acknowledge [credible sources](#) of content generated by AI.

Disclosure

Acknowledging the use of AI enhances trust. Therefore, members of the genealogical community [disclose](#), as context requires, when AI materially influences the creation or modification of [content](#).

Privacy

AI usage can lead to unintended data exposure, putting private information at risk of being publicly disclosed. Therefore, members of the genealogical community take reasonable measures to safeguard private information when using AI.

Education

The use of AI creates new opportunities and risks. Therefore, members of the genealogical community educate themselves about AI to maximize its benefits and minimize its risks to their work.

Compliance

Adherence to legal and contractual obligations is essential for the ethical use of AI. Therefore, members of the genealogical community comply with contracts, [terms of service](#), [intellectual property](#) laws, and data privacy regulations when using or creating AI tools.