

# Researching Genealogy During A Pandemic

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2020 hasn't turned out like most of us planned. But that doesn't mean we can't research genealogy. Not sure what to do while libraries and archives are closed? Here are 20 ideas and resources to help you research your family history during a pandemic.

**1. Establish Your Personal Learning Plan.** I know you love webinars, so why not think about a personal learning plan. Choose webinars based on a theme such as :

- The country/countries you are researching
- DNA
- Researching female ancestors
- Technology

Identify your preferred webinars (maybe by presenter, topic, fee), watch them, and then study the handouts. Study the handouts by exploring the suggested websites, seeking out the books in the bibliographies, and jot down notes for future reference. Resources: Legacy Webinars < <https://familytreewebinars.com/>>; Conference Keeper < <https://conferencekeeper.org/>>

**2. Scan!** It's an excellent time to pull out some of those family photos you have meant to scan and start. You could even watch webinars while you do it! Resources: Family Curator's Genealogy Scan Along < <https://thefamilycurator.com/join-me-for-the-genealogy-scan-along/>>.

**3. Upload Photos to the Cloud.** Use this time to share and store your photos (especially those that you just scanned). Upload them to whatever website makes the most sense to you. Options include an online tree, a Facebook album tagged with descendants, the FamilySearch Memories collection, or a cloud storage website like Dropbox < <https://www.dropbox.com/home>> or Sugar Sync < <https://www1.sugarsync.com/>>. Resources: FamilySearch Blog, How to use Virtual Photo Storage < <https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/virtual-photo-storage/>>.

**4. Download Your Photos from Your Phone.** Are you guilty of this? I go to a library or archive and take a ton of pictures and then think I'll download them later. But really, later never comes. So now's a good time to download them to your computer or a cloud storage website. You could even attach them to your online trees. Some cloud storage websites feature a way to automatically download them to your cloud storage (Dropbox). Resources: Levin Genealogy Consulting, Somewhat Quick Genealogy Tip:

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Uploading Photos from iPhone to Ancestry.com <

<https://www.levingenealogy.com/2019/05/02/somewhat-quick-genealogy-tip-uploading-photos-from-iphone-to-ancestry-com/>>.

**5. Take a 2nd Look at the Census.** I know, I know, you've already looked at the census. But what about exploring the pages before and after your ancestor's listing? Or looking at the columns and making sure you've recorded/analyzed everything? Or if you are using the U.S. Census, learning more about the enumerator instructions? Resources: U.S. Census Bureau Enumerator Instructions <  
[https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/census\\_instructions/](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/census_instructions/)>.

**6. Search WorldCat.** Have you used WorldCat < <https://www.worldcat.org/>>, the world's library catalog? Take some time to enter a keyword that is meaningful for your family history, such as Quakers or Coal Mining. Take some time to search by your ancestor's place to find local history books. Resources: Legacy News, Why You Should Be Using WorldCat Now! <  
[https://news.legacyfamilytree.com/legacy\\_news/2018/12/why-you-should-be-using-worldcat-now.html](https://news.legacyfamilytree.com/legacy_news/2018/12/why-you-should-be-using-worldcat-now.html)> and Legacy Webinars, Tech Zone WorldCat videos <  
<https://familytreewebinars.com/techzone>>.

**7. Search ArchiveGrid** < <https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/>> to become familiar with manuscript collections in the place your ancestor lived. Resources: Legacy News, Using ArchiveGrid for Your Genealogy < [https://news.legacyfamilytree.com/legacy\\_news/2018/04/using-archivegrid-for-your-genealogy.html](https://news.legacyfamilytree.com/legacy_news/2018/04/using-archivegrid-for-your-genealogy.html)>, Legacy Webinars, Tech Zone ArchiveGrid videos <  
<https://familytreewebinars.com/techzone>>.

**8. Search the FamilySearch Catalog** < <https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog>> for the place your ancestor lived. Go through each listing to see what resources you haven't used and then make a list of what you need to check. Resources: FamilySearch Research Wiki, Introduction to FamilySearch Catalog <  
[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Introduction\\_to\\_the\\_FamilySearch\\_Catalog](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Introduction_to_the_FamilySearch_Catalog)>.

**9. Update Your Family Tree.** Take some time to update your family tree, whether it's on your computer or online. Have you made any new discoveries? Have documents to add? Resources: 5 Steps to Expand Your Family Tree < <https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/5-tips-expand-family-tree/>>; Ancestral Findings, Tips for Building a Flawless Family Tree < <https://ancestralfindings.com/tips-building-flawless-family-tree/>>.

**10. Take a New Look at Your DNA Results.** New matches? New ethnicity estimates? Take some time to watch a webinar and learn something new you can do as you review those results. Resources: Your DNA Guide, Organizing Matches with the Leeds Method < <https://www.yourdnaguide.com/leeds-method>>; DNA Painter < <https://dnainter.com/>>.

**11. Timelines.** Create a timeline for an ancestor you are researching now or an ancestor you want to research. Resources: GenealogyBank Blog, Genealogy Timelines: Helpful Research Tools < <https://blog.genealogybank.com/genealogy-timelines-helpful-research-tools.html>>; Cyndi's List, Timelines-Templates and Forms < <https://www.cyndislist.com/timelines/templates/>>.

**12. Revisit your Grandparents.** Have you researched your grandparents? What records are you missing? What social history can you add to their lives? Work on writing some short narratives/stories about their experiences. Resources: GenealogyBank Blog, Home Sources < <https://blog.genealogybank.com/genealogy-101-7-home-sources.html>>; The Social Historian < <https://www.thesocialhistorian.com/women-and-the-victorian-regiment/>>.

**13. Create a Timeline for Your Life.** For many of us, someday, we will be an ancestor. Do your future family genealogist a favor and create a timeline for your own life. Add vital record events, milestones, and historical events that had meaning for you. Resources: GenealogyBank Blog, A Genealogists Perspective Documenting This Pandemic < <https://blog.genealogybank.com/a-genealogists-perspective-documenting-this-pandemic.html>>; FamilySearch Blog, 52 Questions in 52 Weeks: Writing about Your Life Has Never Been Easier < <https://www.familysearch.org/blog/en/52-questions-52-weeks-writing-life-easier/>>.

**14. Start a Journal.** We are living in a unique historical period; document it now by starting a journal. Then look at how you can add to your journal with newspapers, photos, and emails from family. Resources: FamilySearch Research Wiki, Creating a Personal Journal < [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Creating\\_a\\_Personal\\_Journal](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Creating_a_Personal_Journal)>; The Armchair Journalist, Journaling Your Family History Journey < <https://www.thearmchairgenealogist.com/2012/10/journaling-your-family-history-journey.html>>.

**15. Digitize!** Have old photocopies from library visits when you first started your family history? Digitize those, organize them on your computer, and then throw them away. You should never throw away original or hard to replace records, but digitized copies from documents like the census, which is found online, could be saved to your computer. Resources: Family History Daily, Digitizing Family Photos and Records: What's the Best Format to Use? < <https://familyhistorydaily.com/genealogy-help-and-how->

[to/digitizing-family-photos-records/](#)>; Fauquier Public Library, Digitizing Your Genealogy Records <<https://fauquierlibrary.org/2017/04/17/digitizing-your-genealogy-records/>>

**16. Take Your Genealogy to Facebook.** Have you identified Facebook genealogy groups to join? Now is the time to do that. Resources: Katherine R Willson, Genealogy on Facebook List <<https://socialmediagenealogy.com/genealogy-on-facebook-list/>>. FamilySearch Research Wiki, FamilySearch Genealogy Research Groups <[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/FamilySearch\\_Genealogy\\_Research\\_Groups](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/FamilySearch_Genealogy_Research_Groups)>.

**17. Identify Blog Articles to Read.** Bloggers do such a great job of reporting on methodology, new record sets, and case studies. You can learn more about blog posts to read by using Randy Seaver's "Best of..." weekly list or other similar lists. Randy has links to other blogger lists at the end of each weekly "Best of" blog post. Resources: Geneamusings, Best of... blog posts <<https://www.geneamusings.com/>>; Empty Branches on the Family Tree, Friday's Family History <<https://emptybranchesonthefamilytree.com/tag/fridays-family-history-finds/>>.

**18. Work on a Research Plan.** Now's a good time to consult the library and archival catalogs and your family tree and develop a research plan. One of my favorite explanations on creating a genealogical research plan is the online article, "Creating a Genealogy Research Plan Like a Detective" by Kimberly Powell <<https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-develop-genealogy-research-plan-1421685>>. Resources: Are You My Cousin, How to Create Your Genealogy Research Plan (& Why You Should!) <<https://lalisson.com/how-to-create-your-genealogy-research-plan/>>; YouTube, Ancestry, Crafting a Genealogy Research Plan <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZEJC7oruT0>>.

**19. Document an Heirloom.** Have a family heirloom or something you hope will become an heirloom? How about taking some time to photograph it and explain its provenance? Explain what it is, what its importance is to your family, its history, and where it should end up when you are no longer around. Consider long term solutions, including family members willing to inherit it or a possible donation plan. Resources: Family Curator, Caring for Keepsakes <<https://thefamilycurator.com/category/family-keepsakes/>>; A Genealogist in the Archives (the Archive Lady) <<http://agenealogistinthearchives.blogspot.com/>>.

**20. Take a Virtual Trip to Your Ancestral Home.** Sure, you might not be able to travel right now, but we are so lucky to be able to access places virtually. Use websites to access historical maps and images. Resources: What Was There? <<http://www.whatwasthere.com/>>; HistoryPin <<https://www.historypin.org/en/>>; Google Maps <<https://www.google.com/maps/>>.