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# Living Genealogy: A New Kind of Website

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY genealogists have an abundance of tools at their disposal. This includes any number of free websites for building and sharing one's family tree. One such site is LivingGenealogy, [www.livinggenealogy.com](http://www.livinggenealogy.com).

This free site, launched in 2007, but still in beta, lets your family create web pages on ancestors and ancestral hometowns. The website is touted as "a new kind of genealogy website for a new kind of Internet" and has four key features:

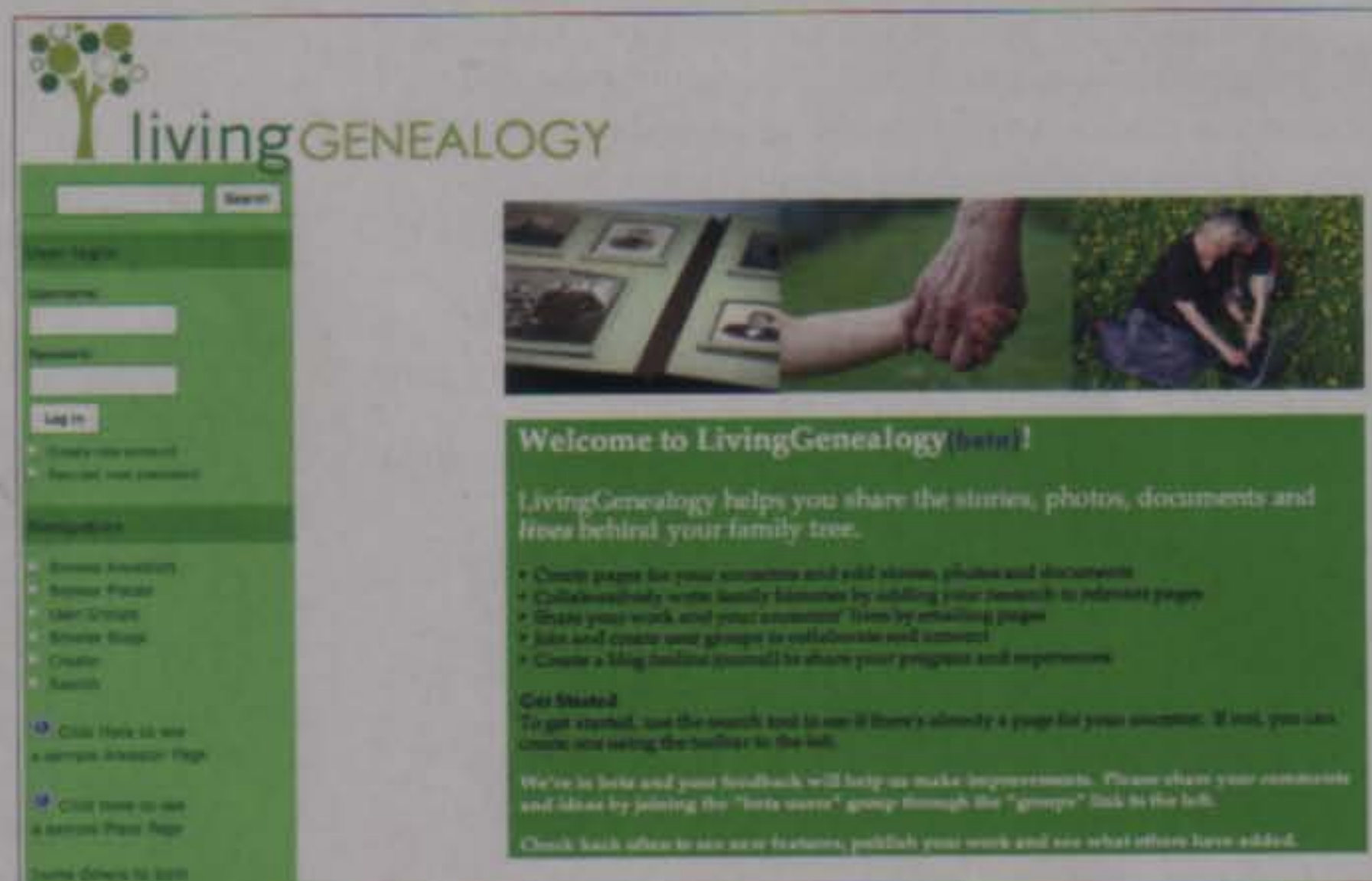
**Ancestor Pages** — A simple template enables you to create a page for an ancestor. Each page may include text, photos, journal entries and memories. They provide spaces for a person's name and dates and places of birth and death. There is also a page to include a text-based personal history. Unfortunately, GEDCOM upload or download is not supported.

**Place Pages** — Users can create pages that are dedicated to geographic locales, such as ancestral hometowns or countries. You can tell others where to find records, offer local history and research advice, or travel tips, and add maps and photographs.

**User Groups** — User Groups can be private, meaning open only to people you specify (e.g., your immediate family) or public such as everyone researching ancestors in the same place (e.g., everybody with ancestors from Dublin). These groups offer a convenient way to connect with others for collaborative research and share ideas, information, resources and tips.

**Blogs** — The built-in Blog enables you to share discoveries and other details. Contributions are stamped with the submitter's user name. If you're logged in, click "Contact" to e-mail the author of a page. You can share family histories through the "Email this page" link that's at the bottom of every page.

click "Create New Account." When successful, you'll be taken to a screen to start creating your first page. Before you create your own page, you can view a sample ancestor page and a sample place page by clicking on the appropriate link on the left-hand side. To get started, first use the search tool



LivingGenealogy main page, [www.livinggenealogy.com](http://www.livinggenealogy.com).

For more details about each part of the site, read "The Future of Free Online Genealogy... An Introduction to LivingGenealogy" post on the first page.

## CREATING A PAGE

To set up your free account, click the "Create an Account" link on the left-hand side. Choose a Username (e.g., JohnSmith) and type in a valid e-mail address (it's not made public, but all e-mails from the system will be sent to this address, including instructions on obtaining a new password and other news/notifications). You can also subscribe to a list of groups, or you can skip this step and go back to it later. Then

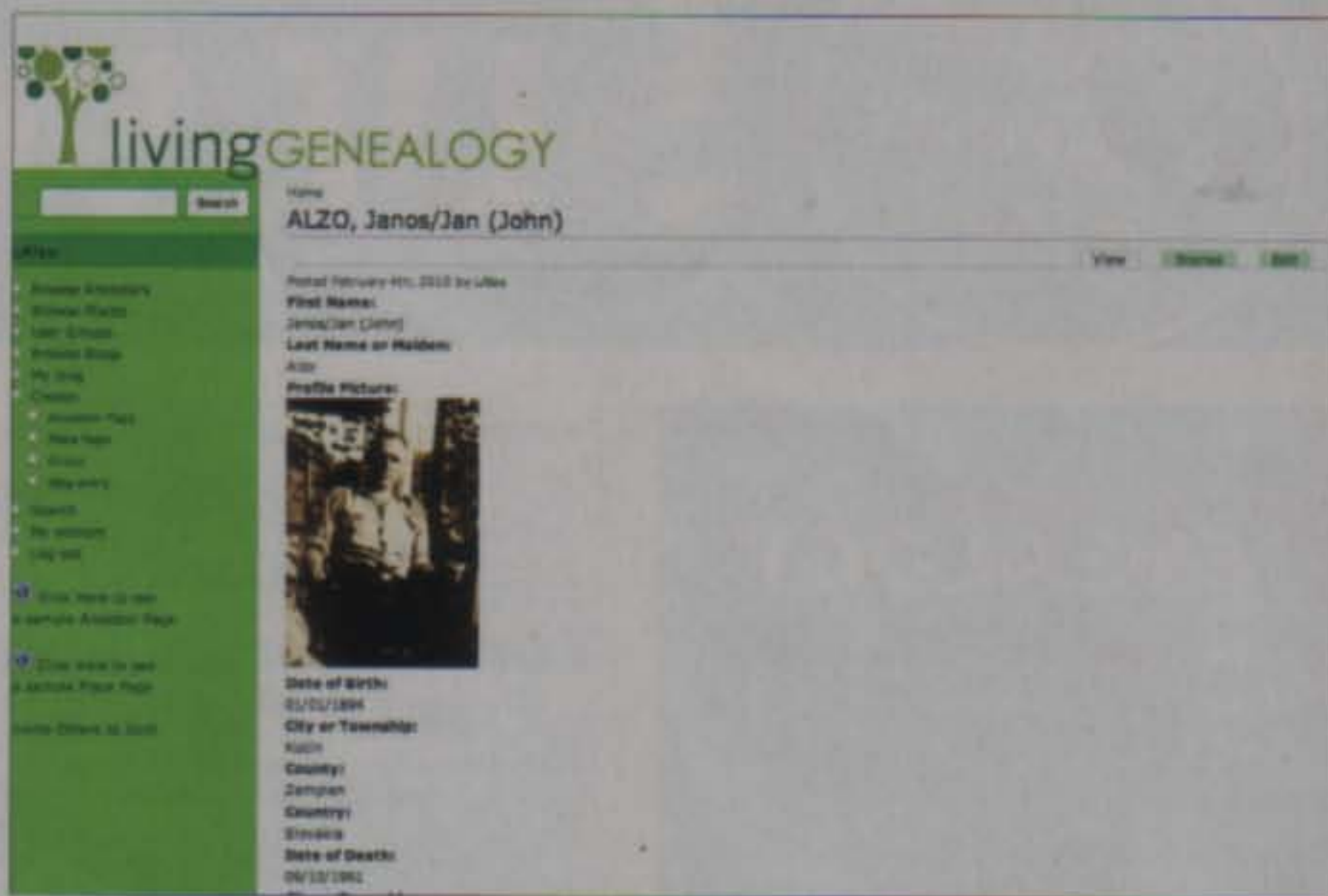
on the site to check if there's already a page for your ancestor (there is also an option to browse ancestors alphabetically). If not, then, once you're logged in, simply click on "Create: Ancestor Page". You can preview the page before you save it and edit the page at any time. I was able to set up my free account in a matter of minutes. I created a page for my grandfather, Janos/Jan (John) Alzo, entering the dates and places of his birth and death and uploading several images and a personal history.

## PROS AND CONS

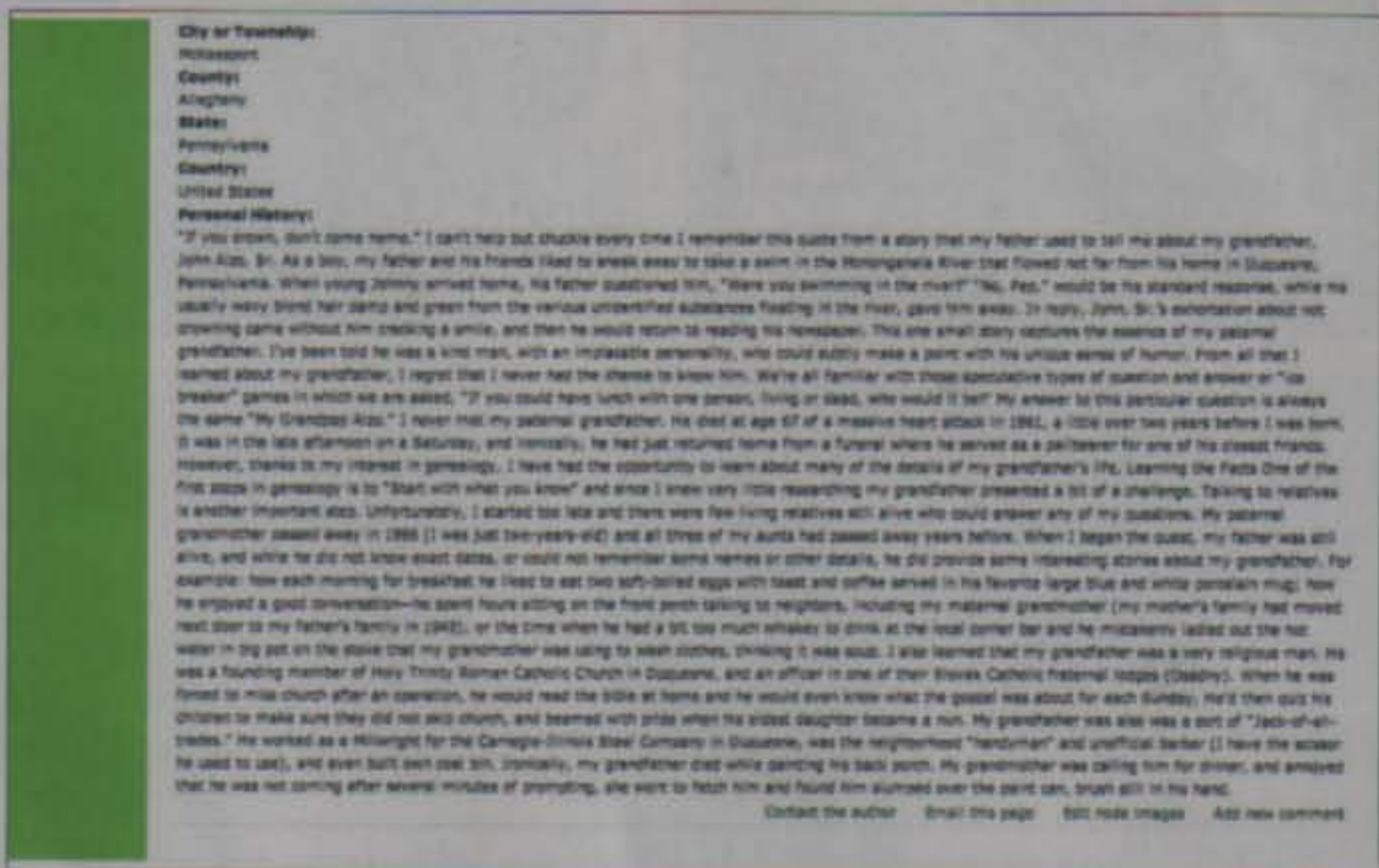
As with any site in beta, there are always bugs to work out. On the

positive side, I found the account creation process was quick and easy — I had mine up and running in a matter of minutes. The site is also intuitive when it comes to creating your ancestor or place page and it's easy to add images. The integrated blog feature is handy, but my favorite feature is the section to add a personal history for each ancestor — this takes the sharing beyond just the names, dates, and places, typical of such family tree building and sharing sites. However, there are some negatives, which hopefully the site's creators can easily address. First and foremost, you can't upload or download a GEDCOM file. Having this facility would validate the genealogical component of the site. Another small glitch I ran into, was with entering the dates. Even though I saved my entry, the site switched the birth month and day from 01/01, which I entered, back to 12/31 and the year from 1894 (my entry) back to 1893. I went back in and typed the month and day without the zero in front, and re-saved. This seemed to work. There was also a problem with my account. When I tried to log in the next day, the site rejected my user name and password, indicating that my account didn't exist. I tried to request a new password, but received a warning that the e-mail address I entered was not found in the system, but yet the ancestor page I set up was there and listed as created by "Anonymous". So I had to create my account again and delete the page by "Anonymous" and then create a new page.

Furthermore, while I like the idea of greater collaboration, as well the ability to contribute research, memories and photos to pages created by other users who may have already created a page for someone I'm connected to, I'm not sure I like the ease by which others can change or delete information at will. I'd prefer some sort of way for users to notify each other and have the permission to update or delete data limited to the person who created the page or to others he or she designates. There also seems to be a heavy



Author's ancestor page for John Alzo, top and bottom.



emphasis on Swedish genealogy — this is not a "con" or criticism, just an observation — so I'd like to see more countries/ethnicities represented.

To keep up with additions, improvements, and updates, read the blog at: [www.livinggenealogy.com/blog/32](http://www.livinggenealogy.com/blog/32). LivingGenealogy is also on Twitter. You can follow site developments at <https://twitter.com/LivingGenealogy>.

LivingGenealogy.com is an interesting site trying to further the collaborating, creating and connecting aspects of genealogical research on the "New Internet". I hope they will add GEDCOM support, and work out some of the other glitches, but this site is one

I'll be watching as it emerges from beta, and obtains more users.

Author, instructor, and lecturer  
**Lisa A. Alzo** is a frequent contributor to Internet Genealogy.