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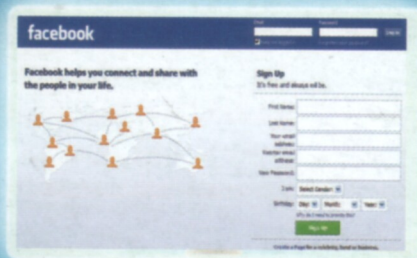
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# Internet GENEALOGY

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# Skype Your Genealogy!

**DO YOU SKYPE?** If you haven't yet explored this free communication service, you should consider doing so. Skype has quickly become one of my favorite "go-to" tools for genealogy. This article will discuss a few ways I've used this tool to further my family history research.

## **SIGN UP — IT'S FREE!**

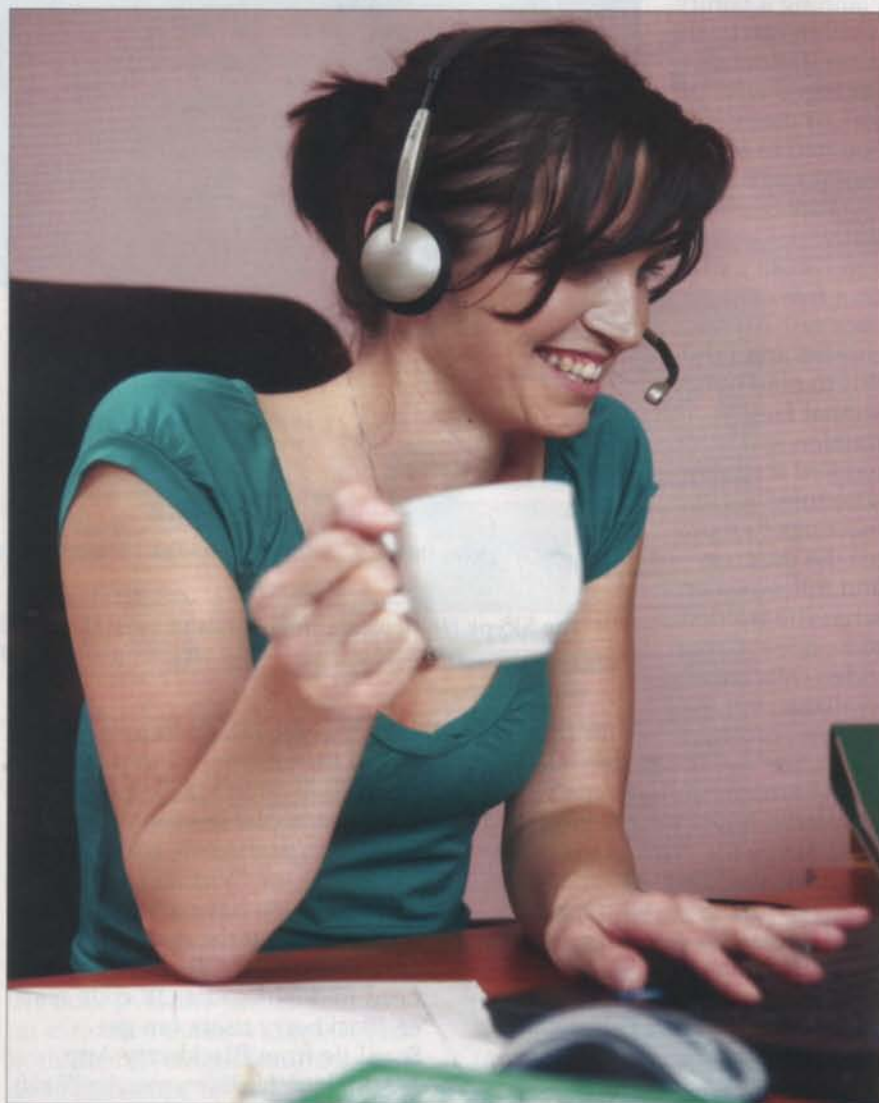
Skype enables you to make free Internet calls to another Skype user anywhere in the world. You can also use it to call friends and family on any phone by signing up for either the "Pay As You Go" or "Pay Monthly" subscriptions. See <http://about.skype.com> for details. To get a free Skype account, go to [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) and click on the "Get Skype" link at the top of the page and follow the instructions to create your account (username and password). You will also need to install Skype on your computer (there are different versions for Mac and PC). Before you install, be sure to read the computing requirements. Once you have your account and launch the program, you can customize your profile, add contacts, and more. You may want to purchase a headset so that you can use the service without the interference of extraneous noise from your environment. If you want to make video calls, you will also need a WebCam (either built-in or a standalone unit). Next, place a call to the Skype Call Testing Service (it's free) to check that your speakers and microphone are working properly. Before you begin, read the "Step-by-Step Guide" online at [www.skype.com/intl/en-us/support/user-guides](http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/support/user-guides).

## **USING SKYPE FOR GENEALOGY**

Here are a few ways to use Skype as one of your genealogical research tools.

### **1. Connect With Far-Flung Family**

I don't live near any of my relatives. Long-distance calls can get expensive and while I have an



Skype enables you to make free Internet calls to another Skype user anywhere in the world!

unlimited cell phone calling plan, I don't necessarily enjoy using that phone for long conversations. With Skype, I can chat regularly with my aunt in Texas or with my Slovak cousin who lives in London, all for free and I can do video chat, which makes it almost seem like we're sitting next to one another. So far, the record for my longest Skype call is with my cousin in London — three hours.

### **2. Conduct Oral History Interviews**

Want to interview your great Aunt Mary, but don't have the time to

travel across the country? It's simple to do so with Skype. You can even share your desktop to show documents or photographs, or possibly use it to demonstrate a family recipe or tradition. If you'd like to record the conversation, there are a number of free and fee-based programs that will work with Skype. See the article "15 Apps for Recording Skype Conversations" at [www.voip-sol.com/15-apps-for-recording-skype-conversations](http://www.voip-sol.com/15-apps-for-recording-skype-conversations).

### **3. Plan a Family Reunion**

Most families today are scattered

## Skype Your Genealogy!

across the country and perhaps even around the globe. Planning a family reunion can be difficult if you can't get together in person, or costly if you had to rely on traditional long-distance carriers. But with Skype, you can all join in on a free conference call. My cousins and I did this to plan our annual family reunion and it worked well. We scheduled regular meetings to monitor the progress and follow up on what still needed to be done. Group video calls are also available, but for a fee (you can try it free for seven days). See [www.skype.com/intl/en-us/features/allfeatures/group-video-calls](http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/features/allfeatures/group-video-calls). Many people have also used Skype for "virtual visits" at holidays, weddings or other occasions, so that those who can't be there in person can still participate virtually.

### 4. Collaborate With Fellow Researchers

Need to work with a cousin on a family tree, or other researchers on a community-based project — perhaps for a genealogical or historical society? Skype works great for this purpose. During several of the Skype sessions with my cousin in London, we put our heads together to discuss a number of family connections that were a bit tricky to figure out.

### 5. Share Your Knowledge or Results

Many professional genealogists use Skype to communicate with current or potential clients, interact with fellow committee members for national organizations, or to give virtual presentations or teach courses. As a regular speak-

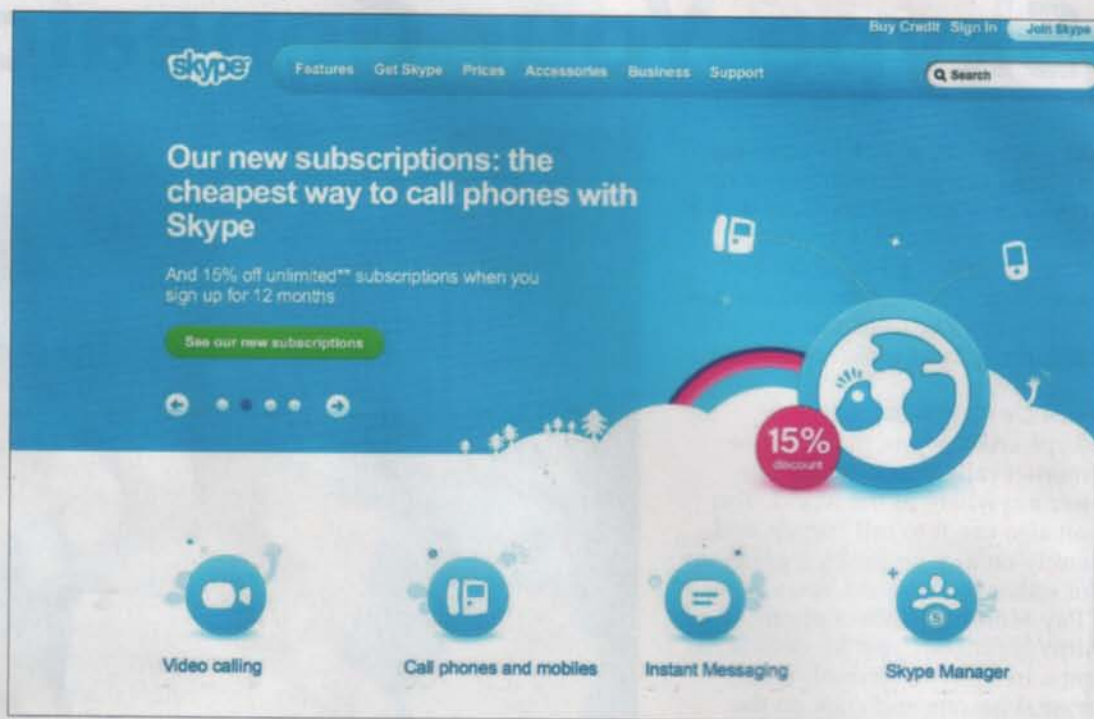
er on the genealogy lecture circuit, any of the talks I give in person can be delivered via Skype. To learn more, please visit my website, [www.lisaalzo.com](http://www.lisaalzo.com), and click on the link in the "Virtual Lectures" section. If you have a Smartphone, go to my bio at the end of this article and scan the QR code. You'll need to download a QR code reader. Blackberry users can get ScanLife from Blackberry App World, <http://blackberry.com/AppWorld>; iPhone users, visit <http://news.cnet.com/qr-code-readers-for-iphone> for several different readers available.

You may also want to check out some additional features — both free and fee-based — such as Skype Mobile, Skype for Business, Skype on your TV and more. It's also worth noting that while many people use Skype in place of a traditional telephone, the site clearly states: "Skype is not a replacement for your telephone and can't be used for emergency calling." You'll need to plan for this accordingly.

### CONCLUSION

Like any new gadget or application, there's a small initial learning

curve, but once you get the hang of Skype, you'll use it often, and will be surprised at how quickly it becomes a key communication tool for staying in touch with family, friends, and colleagues, and an essential application for your roots-sleuthing activities.



The Skype Homepage contains lots of great links and tabs for keeping in touch with your fellow genealogists!

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



To learn more about Lisa's lectures, which can be delivered via Skype, scan this QR code with your smartphone (you must have a QR code reader).