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Researching Your Family Roots Online

SOFTWARE SPECIAL!

We Show You What's Available and Where to Get it!



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How to Become an Interactive Genealogist!

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AND MUCH MORE!



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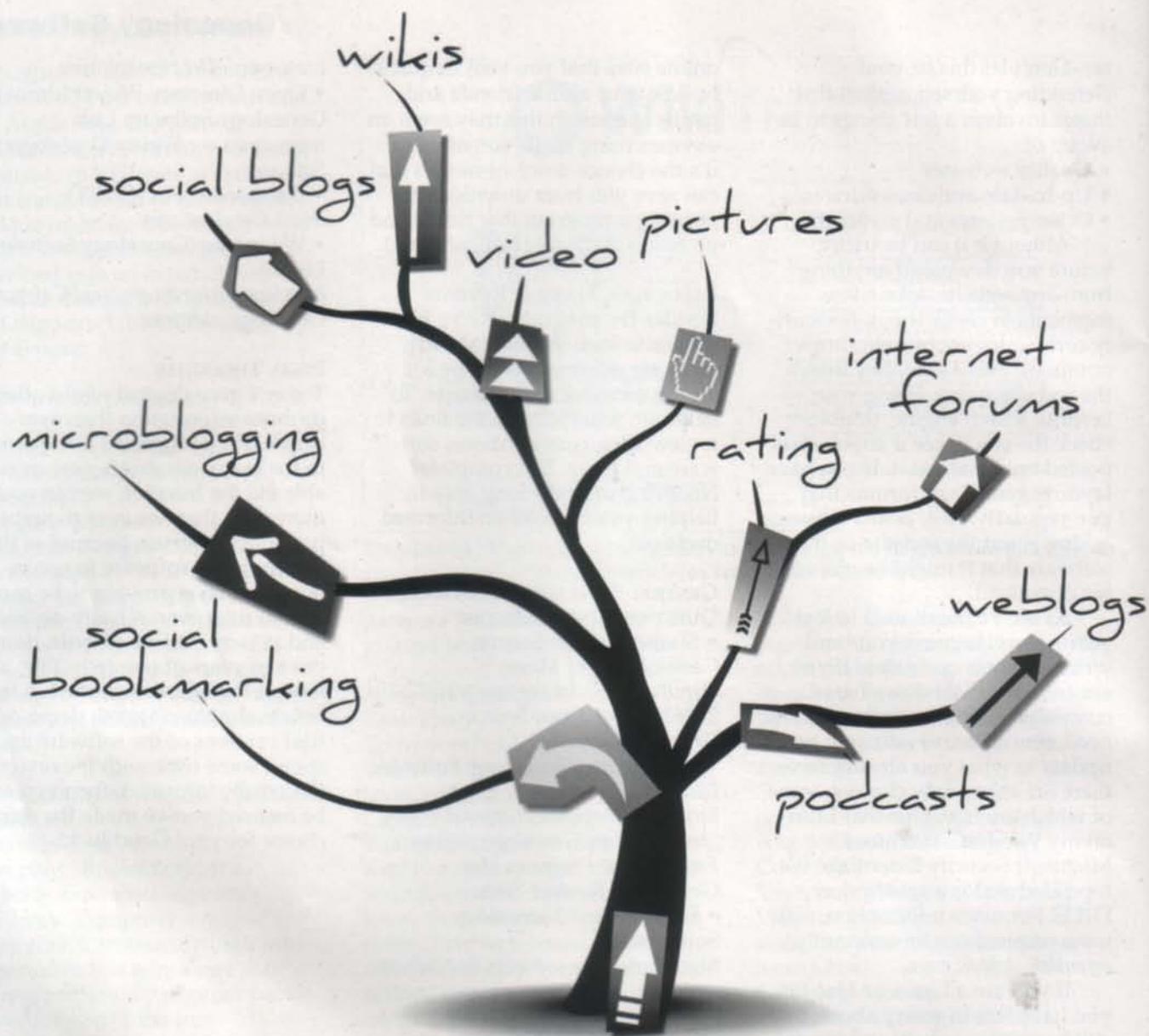
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Become an Interactive Genealogist!

Lisa A. Alzo offers tips on how to make the Web work for you and your genealogy research!

Become an Interactive Genealogist!

GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH in the 21st century is no longer just a solitary activity performed in the dark corner of a library or courthouse.

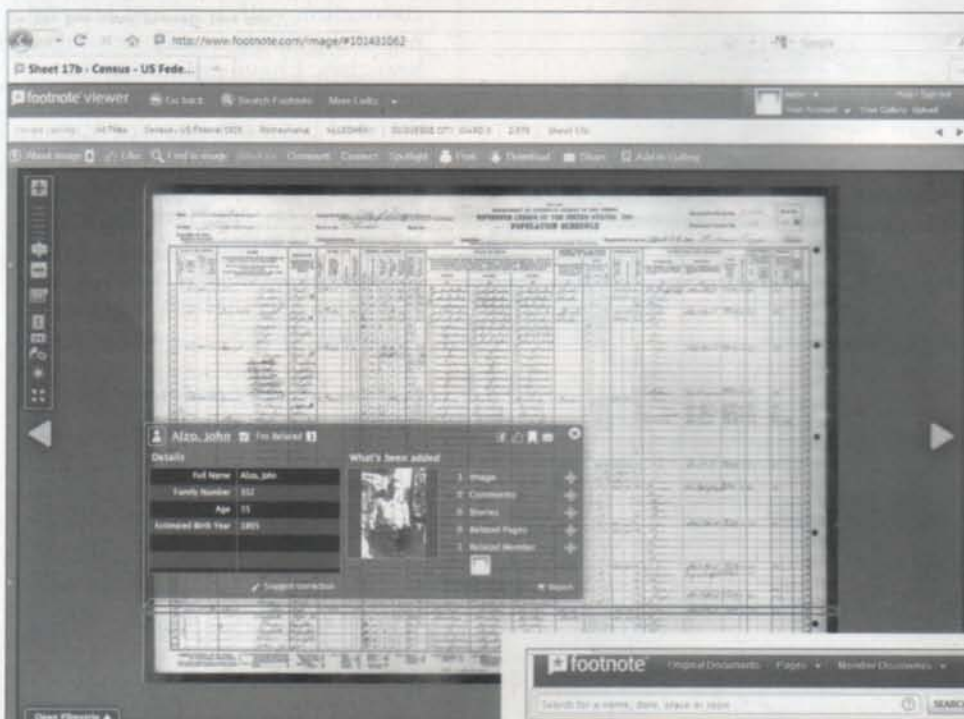
can sign up for a free account to create pages, but if you want to use any records from the site's premium content, you'll need to

2. Skype

Skype, www.skype.com, offers a great free way to keep in touch with family and friends. I also use it to interview family members, and then can use a third-party program of my choice to record the conversation. See, my "Skype Your Genealogy" in the April/May/June 2011 issue of *Internet Genealogy*.

3. Family Website

I've been involved with Myfamily.com, www.myfamily.com, websites since 1999. It is a great way for my family to share information in an invitation-only, password-protected environment for as little as \$29.95 per year. I also co-administer a village-based website for the area that includes the village in Slovakia, where my maternal grandmother was born.



The author has used Footnote's "Pages" and "Interactive Census" to make her ancestors more visible online with the hopes of making connections with others researching similar surnames or ancestral villages. Here is a page for the author's grandfather, and a 1930 census page for the Alzo family with annotations.

Technology and the Internet have opened up the world to family history sleuths. Major online databases have incorporated "interactive" features now, social media sites have catapulted the concept of networking, and internet giant Google can be utilized by genealogists for so much more than just vanity searches and quick information gathering. This article will discuss some of my favorite ways to make genealogical research more efficient and fun!

1. Creating Fold3 Memorial Pages
With Fold3 Memorial pages (formerly Footnote Pages), www.fold3.com, you can create online tribute pages for your ancestors, using your own files or items you locate on the site. You

be a subscriber.

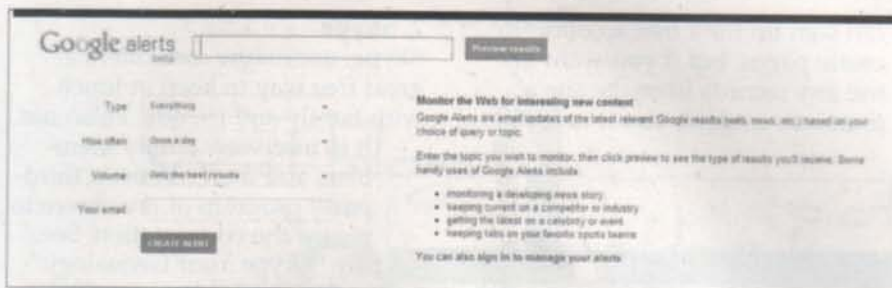
Fold3 also has an "Interactive 1930 Census", where you can annotate entries for your ancestors. Read more about Fold3 Pages (formerly Footnote Pages) in the June/July 2009 issue of *Internet Genealogy*.



4. Google Alerts

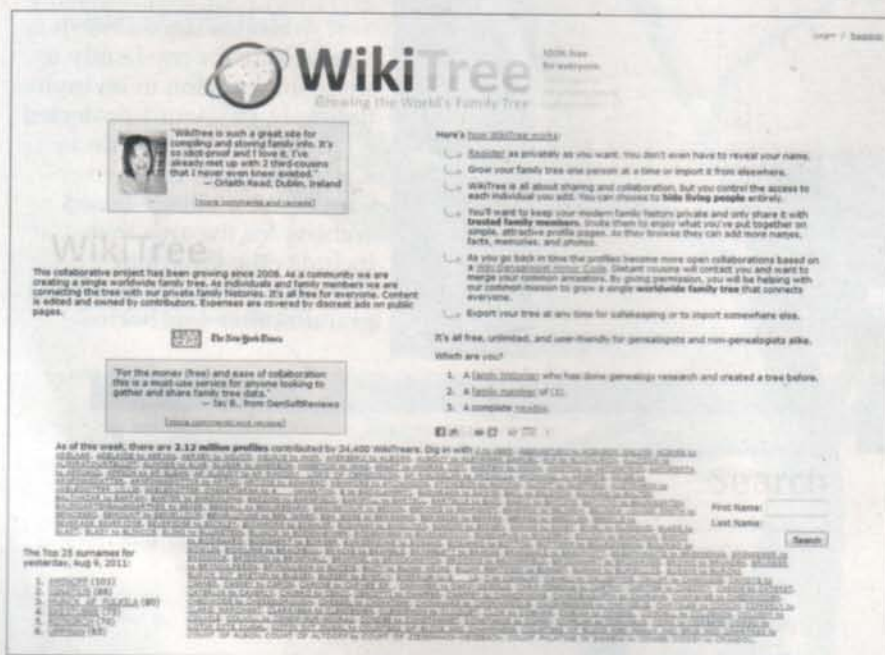
I use Google, www.google.com, all the time for both genealogy and non-genealogy Internet searches. But because the web is dynamic and content is constantly being added or updated, I don't want to have to search for the same genealogy and family history top-

Become an Interactive Genealogist!



Above: Set up Google Alerts, www.google.com/alerts, to get up-to-date results on key genealogical terms/queries you define.

Below: WikiTree, www.wikitree.com, is one site where you can plant your family tree online.



ics every day. With my free Gmail account, I can set up Google Alerts, www.google.com/alerts, to search for "Alzo Genealogy," my blog, The Accidental Genealogist, www.theaccidentalgenealogist.com, or any other keywords I request, and e-mail me with the best results. I can even tell Google how often I want to be alerted. I also use iGoogle, www.google.com/ig, which has features that make me feel like I have my own research assistant! For more information, read my article on "Getting More from Google," *Internet Genealogy*, April/May 2010.

5. Genealogy Radio Shows

If you're not joining in on the free radio shows on Blog Talk Radio, www.blogtalkradio.com, you're missing out on a great opportunity for learning and socializing with oth-

ers who share your interest and passion for family history. Both Geneablogger's Radio, www.blogtalkradio.com/geneabloggers, and The Federation of Genealogical Societies (FGS) "My Society" radio show, www.fgs.org/fgsradio, are hosted by genealogist Thomas MacEntee of High-Definition Genealogy, <http://hidefgen.com>.

6. Webinars and Online Learning

Webinars (online seminars you can participate in at home in your jammies!) are one of the hottest trends in genealogy right now. These Webinars are being offered by genealogy companies, societies, and individual instructors on a variety of topics (some are free; others require a minimal registration fee). I've participated in webinars as both an attendee and an instructor. Get a complete list at

www.geneawebinars.com.

7. Online Family Trees

Putting your family tree online helps increase your chances of connecting with long lost kin and hopefully filling in any missing branches. I have online family trees on several different sites. Some of the more popular ones include Ancestry.com, <http://trees.ancestry.com>; Geni.com www.geni.com; MyHeritage.com's Family Tree Builder, www.myheritage.com/family-tree-builder; and WikiTree, www.wikitree.com. There are many others.

8. Find A Grave and DeadFred

At Find A Grave, www.findagrave.com, you can search 65 million grave records, add images and details about the graves of ancestors, create virtual memorials, add 'virtual flowers' and a note to a loved one's grave, and more. This is a great participation site. What genealogist doesn't have "mystery" or unidentified photographs? DeadFred, www.deadfred.com, is a free online genealogy photo archive with 105,000+ records, over 17,000 surnames, and 2,076 photo reunions. This is a fully interactive site where you can search the collection of posted photos as well as post your own.

9. Locality-Based Research Sites

For many years, I have written and lectured about "cluster genealogy" — the process of researching those in your ancestors' inner circles, for example, other relatives, friends, neighbors, or associates when you hit a brick-wall. This concept is also often referred to as "researching sideways". It is rooted in the concept of "locality-based" research. Now, there are websites dedicated to the idea of mapping out your ancestors' lives based on where they lived or participated in significant events. Two such sites are Ancestral Atlas (\$), www.ancestralatlas.com, (See the April/May 2010 issue of *Internet Genealogy*), and Ancestral Hunt (\$), www.ancestralhunt.com. Both sites are great as "virtual pushpins" to map your family and find others who

may be researching families from the same locality. You can also use the free tool, Google Earth, <http://earth.google.com>, to pinpoint places where your ancestors resided and even create customized interactive virtual tours using maps, images, movies, and more.

10. Social Media

Looking for some virtual places to quickly network with, or even have some face time with, other genealogists? Social networking sites, such as Facebook, www.facebook.com, GenealogyWise, www.genealogywise.com, and Twitter, www.twitter.com, are popular sites genealogists are using to locate or reconnect with family members or other researchers. Writing a family history blog is another great way to greatly increase your chances of family finding you. Post about your research finds, comment on other genealogists' posts and join groups for those who share your genealogical interests. Check out Geneabloggers, www.geneabloggers.com, with its listing of over 2,000 genealogy

/family history blogs. The "New Kid on the Block": Google Plus or G+ for short — where you add family, friends, associates, etc. to your "circles" — is the newest site to gain momentum. You can also create hangouts to spend time virtually with fellow genealogists. Another virtual place to meet is Second Life, www.secondlife.com, which has several regular genealogy meetings, including a virtual chapter of the Association of Professional Genealogists, www.apgen.org.

SUMMARY

When I started my genealogy 22 years ago, the research process was pretty much a one-way street, and interaction was limited to asking librarians and records clerks for books, microfilm, or other information, posting queries in society newsletters, and trying to



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track down family using telephone directories and cold-calling, and/or "snail mail" correspondence. For today's family history sleuth, there are just so many ways to get involved. If you're stuck in the genealogy "dark ages," come explore the brave new world of 21st-century genealogy. If you're not already an "interactive genealogist," why not get started? You'll increase your chances of breaking down those research brickwalls, and perhaps even connect with a cousin, or two, or 20, and/or make many valuable connections and great friends along the way.

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Author, lecturer, and instructor, Lisa A. Alzo has been tracking her East European ancestors for over 20 years. She is a frequent contributor to *Family Chronicle* and *Internet Genealogy*. Smartphone and tablet users can scan the QR code below to visit her website at www.lisaalzo.com.

