



## Genealogy NFTs

Lisa A. Alzo discusses transitioning from family heirlooms to NFTs

**G**ENEALOGISTS EXPLORE THE PAST TO PRESERVE IT FOR THE FUTURE. Often, we hear the phrase “collecting dead relatives” in terms of researching the lives of our ancestors and adding their names and other pertinent information to our family trees. Now imagine the ability to go a step further to pass along a digital version of your family tree, family stories, or long-held recipes with a traceable proof of ownership and a public record that is unchangeable.

Perhaps you have heard the buzzwords “blockchain,” “crypto,” or “NFT” in the media and are curious about what they refer to and why they receive so much attention. This article provides something of an introduction, and why there may be a good reason for you to become involved with creating your own NFTs.

An accompanying article provides suggestions for the creation of digital art from heirloom photographs. The images you create could potentially satisfy two main criteria associated with non-fungible tokens (NFTs), being unique and digital.

The idea of digital genealogy assets may seem futuristic; however, this future is already here. I imagine some readers will be asking, “Why should I care about NFTs and what possible use could they be to the genealogical community?” Well, it is all to do with the blockchain revolution. There is an already established interest in terms of cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin (and many others) and all types of NFTs. NFTs refer to more than just digital images. Addition of digital games, comic books, art, music, fan fiction, and much more to a blockchain began with one called Ethereum in 2015. Ethereum followed on from the concept originally begun with the Bitcoin blockchain in 2009.

Digital genealogy assets in the form of NFTs are already here. Will you be ready? (NinoElNino, iStockphoto.com)

### Feasibility for Genealogy?

To understand the significance of NFTs in general, and genealogical NFTs in particular, we first need to have a rudimentary understanding of what a blockchain is. I’ll leave a more detailed explanation to the experts. For now, I think we can all grasp the concept of a normal database, so it’s probably easiest to think of a blockchain as a specialized type of database. Blockchains are decentralized, spread over many computers comprising blocks of data linked (or in the blockchain vernacular, chained) together using cryptographic techniques to prevent hacking (unauthorized access). In this way a digital timeline is created that establishes ownership and records subsequent ownership of digital files, whether