



AI, Genealogy and You: A Perfect Match?

Tony Bandy looks at the integration of artificial intelligence into our family histories

METHODOLOGIES OF FAMILY RESEARCH ARE CONSTANTLY changing. Think about the transformation that has occurred in just the last 10-15 years. From written paper notes and scanned microfilm to mobile phones, portable document creation and more. But have you heard about the latest “new” technologies? The use and implementation of artificial intelligence into family research?

Britannica encyclopedia is: “... the ability of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings.” (Source: www.britannica.com/technology/artificial-intelligence)

This concept is often used in tandem with the terms “machine learning”, a practical subset of artificial intelligence that employs specific algorithms and routines to produce learning outputs. In practical terms, this means taking raw or finished data and then applying software learning routines without the use of human analysis or inputs and creating or merging data into a finished product, action, or implementation.

Here’s an example: Your smartphone! Every day we use our mobile devices to help us find the best places to eat, the next appointments on our calendar, our favorite music, and typing an instant message to our friends for a genealogy meet-up! But if we look a little closer, what is actually going on is that software algorithms on our devices are learning our routines, what we like, what we don’t like, where we go, what we type and more.

This collected data and actions are then being analyzed either locally or in the cloud (Internet-based) and then applied to our devices, predicting outcomes and suggestions as we use them. Case in point: Google Maps. Have you ever asked Google

The screenshot shows the MyHeritage Blog interface. At the top, there's a search bar and navigation options. The main content area features a large advertisement for 'Photo Repair'. The ad includes the MyHeritage logo, the text 'Introducing Photo Repair', and a description: 'Repairs scratched and damaged photos using AI technology'. Below this, there are two images of a woman, one with scratches and one without. A credit line reads 'Credit: Jānis Praulis'. At the bottom of the ad, the URL 'www.myheritage.com/photos' is provided. To the right of the ad, there's a 'Popular Posts' section with several article thumbnails and titles, such as 'Colorize your black and white photos automatically with MyHeritage In Color™' and 'Introducing the MyHeritage Photo Enhancer'. A 'Go to Archive' button is located below the popular posts section.

MyHeritage’s use of artificial intelligence is really transforming the methodologies of family research!

It’s true. Artificial intelligence with a subset in machine learning is now actively being employed in all phases of genealogy by both major and minor companies. Formerly a singular, personal approach to finding ancestors, we can now employ Internet-based, software-driven algorithmic research, extracting facts and history that we might have never known about in the analog era.

This integration is poised to make huge impacts in how we search for and add to our family histories. It’s amazing, and this is only the beginning! If you have not had much chance yet to think about this, it’s important that you get up to speed on these developments. Let’s get started!

Artificial Intelligence? Machine Learning?

Before we start on our journey, it’s important to get a grasp on what exactly artificial intelligence is and how it works. The concept of artificial intelligence, commonly shortened to “AI”, according to the online