

# Social Media For Jewish Genealogy

or How to Connect, Collect and Commiserate with potential cousins and complete strangers on the other side of the world and right next door!

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## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social media is defined as “websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking”. Social networking is a fancy phrase for socialising or networking... something we all do IRL (that’s millennial for “in real life”)

At its simplest, social media is a collection of platforms that let you post your own content - ie: words, pictures, videos, gifs etc - and to see what others post; users can then rate, comment, like and share each others posts.

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## MAJOR SOCIAL NETWORKS

### Facebook

**Facebook** is the largest social media platform (for now at least) with over 1.6 billion active monthly users.

It is designed to connect family, friends and groups of like minded folk. But as a free service it means that they have the right to monitor your every interaction on the site. This data is sold to marketers so they can target you with ads for products and services you might actually be interested in.

Facebook has hundreds of groups and pages relevant to Jewish genealogy.

### Blogs

**Blogs** can be very useful and are technically considered a social media platform, although one largely controlled by the blogger. Subscribers can comment on posts to interact with the blogger and other readers in an intimate forum. Blogs are basically a form of self publishing where a person or company with something to say can create a FEED and write about what they’re interested in.

Ancestry, MyHeritage and Familysearch all have commercial blogs that post stories of interest (and promote their products and services)...

Shtetlinks are also a type of Blog...

Use [Blogfinder.com](http://Blogfinder.com) to search for blogs and blog posts in your area of interest

## YouTube & Vimeo

**Youtube** and **Vimeo** are designed specifically for posting and sharing videos.

On sites like these you can find video travelogues, first person interviews and how to videos that may help you find context or answer specific questions.

Vimeo is a smaller service than YouTube, with 35 million registered members, compared to the 1.3 BILLION people that use Youtube, but it's still worth searching on there as many professional filmmakers use Vimeo to showcase their work.

## Flickr, Instagram

Sites like **Flickr** and **Instagram** host images and short videos.

They can be useful to find images related to a time or place relevant to your research.

## Pinterest

**Pinterest** is a digital scrapbook or mood-board application. If you find an image you wish to keep on a website or in image search app, you can "PIN" it to one of your "boards". You can create multiple boards and you can search for and pin images easily within the app as well.

## Twitter, Snapchat & LinkedIn

**Twitter** is a micro blogging platform - that is it only supports short posts, called tweets, of up to 288 characters (up until recently Twitter only supported 144 characters so tweets were an exercise in poetic brevity). Twitter is useful if you find a person or an organisation that specializes in your area of interest with an account. They may post links that will be of interest to you.

**Snapchat** is a photo-sharing platform where, once you've viewed the photo, it disappears... it's ephemeral. I don't think Snapchat is of much use to genealogists, but it's very popular with millennials.

There are also sites aimed specifically at business users - like LinkedIn and BizSugar. These may be good for networking but their focus is not terribly relevant to our pursuit.

## Google+, Reddit & Tumblr

**Google+** is a social networking site owned by Google. It's their 4th foray into social networking and had a complete makeover in 2015. People interact on Google+ and a user can organise their list of contacts into 'circles' (groups). Members see posts in a 'stream' from users in their circles.

**Reddit** is a social news aggregator, web content rating and discussion website. Users submit content such as links, text and images which are then voted up or down by other users.

**Tumblr** is a microblogging and social networking site where users can post multimedia and other content.

These sites are of limited utility to family historians but may host groups of people interested in specific historical events or localities that could help give context to your research.

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## FACEBOOK

### Pages and Groups

A Facebook PAGE is a public profile specifically created for businesses, brands, celebrities, causes, and other organisations. Unlike personal profiles, pages do not gain "friends," but "fans" - which are people who choose to "like" a page.

A Facebook GROUP is a page created for an organisation or business to promote activities. Users can join the group and post their thoughts on a wall and interact through discussion threads.

### Follow the rules

For these groups to work, everyone must abide by the rules set out by the administrators. These rules are usually posted as a 'pinned post' , a post that is stuck permanently to the top of the group page, or they will be sent to you in a private message when you join.

Failure to follow the rules will result in suspension or expulsion form the group.

### Find a group that's right for you

[jewishgenealogysurnameproject.com](http://jewishgenealogysurnameproject.com) - this site has a comprehensive and ever growing list of Facebook pages and groups relevant to Jewish Genealogy.

### Dos and Don'ts

#### DO

- Be specific and detailed, yet brief!
- Search first, someone may have already asked our question
- be generous... if you help people, they'll help you

#### DON'T

- Talk politics unless specifically invited to or contextualising an historical event
- Insult or denigrate other group members
- spam, spruik or proselytize

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## THE BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

### Connection

The internet connects the world. Social Media gives you the opportunity to find and interact with like minded researchers with invaluable local knowledge. It can also give you the opportunity to find distant family and their descendants.

### Research

Connecting with researchers and groups of people with specialised knowledge can help you break through brick walls, track down hard to find records and access on the ground help.

Some groups allow you to post pictures for translation and to gain historical context

## **Camaraderie**

Share your success stories. Learn how other people broke through their brick walls. Keep up to date with the latest news on record releases and DNA advances.

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## **THE DANGERS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **Inaccurate information**

Don't believe everything you read/ hear/ see on the internet!! That doesn't just apply to genealogy of course, it applies to EVERYTHING ONLINE!!! Of course by framing your question the right way you are more likely to get a useful and accurate answer.

### **Identity theft/ Privacy/ Scammers/ Phishing**

Unfortunately this represents the dark underbelly of the internet. As soon as the world became networked, bad actors found a way to subvert the system. Be aware of the information you are sharing. Be aware of your privacy settings and the settings of the page or the group you are interacting with. Do not be complacent. If you don't understand these issues, ask for help.

Phishing refers to emails and other attempts to get you to click on a link infected with malicious code. Scammers in particular can use genealogical data to crack passwords - how many sites ask for your mother's maiden name as a security question?

The Australian Government has a website with tips for keeping your information safe online.  
[www.staysmartonline.gov.au](http://www.staysmartonline.gov.au)

### **Corporate Invasion of Privacy**

Not all online scamming is illegal. Social networking is an invitation for major corporations to invade your privacy and sell your personal information. Last year, Facebook earned an estimated \$16 billion in ad revenue. That's not bad for a free site. If Facebook and other social networking sites don't charge their members how do they make so much money? They do it by selling the ability to specifically target advertisements. These sites run algorithms that search for keywords, web browsing habits, and other data stored on your computer or social networking profile and provide you with advertisements targeted specifically to you.

On social networking sites, the website isn't the product - the users are.

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## **BEWARE THE TIME SUCKERS**

Social media is designed to be distracting and addictive. Don't get sucked in.

Just like genealogy itself Social Media will engage you to the point of distraction.