

WikiTree

WikiTree is a free, shared social networking [genealogy website](#) that allows users individually to research and contribute to their own personal family trees, while building and collaborating on a singular worldwide family tree within the same system. [2][3] The site was created in 2008^[4] by Chris Whitten, developer of the [WikiAnswers](#) website, and is owned and hosted by Interesting.com, Inc.^[5] The site uses a “wiki markup” language (powered by [MediaWiki](#) software) that offers both beginning and advanced users the ability to

create and edit personal profiles, categories and “free space” pages to document their family’s history. As of October 2017, the WikiTree website has over 464,000 registered members and maintains over 15.5 million ancestral profiles.^[6] GenealogyInTime Magazine listed WikiTree as the 15th most popular [genealogy](#) site in January 2016.^[7]

Honor Code

Users requesting membership in the WikiTree community are asked to commit to a nine-point Honor Code that encourages collaboration, accuracy, and the use of sources and citations.^[8] Courtesy in dealing with other

WikiTree



Type of business	Privately held company
Founded	2008
Headquarters	New York, New York, USA
Founder(s)	Chris Whitten
President	Chris Whitten
Industry	Genealogy, Social media
Website	wikitree.com
Alexa rank	7,014. ^[1]

members, consideration of copyrights, and respect for the privacy of others are also among the hallmarks of the Honor Code.^[9]

User privacy

WikiTree's privacy controls allow users to protect their personal information, and that of their more recent ancestors and descendants, while providing the ability to publicly share and collaborate on historical data related to their more distant forebears.^{[10][11]} Each profile is managed by one or more profile managers, and other members who may be related or willing to share information about that person can be added to the profile's "Trusted List".^[12] Members of a profile's Trusted List have full access to view and edit details on the page, regardless of the privacy level, and all changes are tracked for future reference. WikiTree maintains seven different profile privacy levels.

A distinctive aspect of the collaborative nature of WikiTree, which has raised some controversy, is that profiles of people who were either born more than 150 years ago or who deceased more than 100 years ago are open for editing by any member in good standing. This means that members who have documented the genealogy of their family have no way of preventing people who are not of the family from altering the data of these family members. As with all contributions to WikiTree, members are requested to provide source citations to justify their changes, but sources are not always provided.

Recognizing that in some cases this openness can lead to unwanted and unwarranted additions to the global family tree, the volunteer leaders at WikiTree have created procedures for working with two special categories of ancestor profiles. Members must now pass a self-evaluated quiz to edit profiles of persons whose birth year is from 1500 to 1699, which includes most of the early colonial period in the Americas. Members can “pass” this test by demonstrating they have read the WikiTree source and editing guidelines. As of January 2016, a more stringent evaluation, based on a member’s demonstrated genealogical experience and ability to work cooperatively, is now required to edit profiles of persons born before 1500.^[13]

This process attempts to strike a balance between open and collaborative editing and the desire to strive for historical accuracy and credibility within the genealogical community.

Features

The WikiTree site emphasizes the building of a shared, worldwide family tree. Members do not maintain individual trees, but instead contribute to a single collaborative tree. The site's goal is to have one profile for every person, whether living or dead. Duplicate profiles are merged and the information is consolidated, connecting different family branches in the process.^[14]

The site maintains a page of “frequently asked questions” (FAQs) and a “genealogist to genealogist” (G2G) forum that allows users to get answers and help with both genealogical and technical questions. Points and badges are awarded to members who answer questions and contribute information to the site. Additionally, the site is managed by a team of volunteer leaders and mentors that serves the community in a variety of capacities, in particular with helping users gain proficiency in using the system.^[15]

Projects

Leaders also manage numerous projects within the site that further organize researchers by specific interests. Among the current projects are the 1776, Acadians, Australian Convicts and First Settlers, European Aristocrats, Puritan Great Migration, Scottish Clans, U.S. Civil War, and U.S. Presidents projects. Many of the projects maintain social communities on [Google+](#) to keep members informed of current happenings and topics for discussion.

Two new projects on the site are the Global Cemeteries Project and the Global Family Reunion Project, a tie-in to a worldwide family genealogy event that was hosted by author [A.J. Jacobs](#).^[16] The Global Family Reunion took place at the [New York Hall of Science](#), located in [Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens](#), on June 6, 2015. The site also maintains a blog that presents two

other frequently visited pages: the “Profile of the Week” and the “Photo of the Week”.^[17] Active members are asked to view and vote on the best submissions for each category.

GEDCOM Uploads and Matching

Users can upload computer-generated [GEDCOM](#) files with digital genealogical data gathered from personal research and recollections, as well as from other non-copyrighted sources available elsewhere on the internet. Once a user's GEDCOM file is uploaded, WikiTree’s “GEDCompare”^[18] tool compares data contained in the file and identifies matches with existing profiles, allowing users to find details about their ancestors that have already been entered by others, and eliminating the creation of duplicated profiles.

DNA Testing and Confirmation

WikiTree supports doing DNA based genealogy using DNA Ancestor Confirmation Aid (ACA),^[19] a tool that allows members to upload the results of their [Y-chromosome \(Y-DNA\)](#) and [mitochondrial \(mtDNA\)](#) tests for purposes of scientifically confirming paternal (male) and maternal (female) relationships within their family tree.^[20] The ACA is designed to:

- confirm or reject paternal and maternal relationships over the past five generations (when DNA test results are available for other family members);
- list relevant DNA tests that would aid in the confirmation of such relationships for family members who have not been tested;
- show which such relationships have already been confirmed (via comments provided by other tested relatives);
- identify which relatives should take certain tests in order to confirm or reject such relationships; and,
- aid in finding relevant resources and other helpful information.

Additional features and details relating to the site's DNA tools are discussed

on the [International Society of Genetic Genealogy's \(ISOGG's\) WikiTree](#) wiki page.^[21]

References

1. ^ ["Site Overview, WikiTree.com"](#). Alexa.com. Retrieved 2014-10-03.
2. ^ Fire, Michael; et al. (2014-09-02). "Quantitative Analysis of Genealogy Using Digitised Family Trees". [arXiv:1408.5571v3](#).
3. ^ Rifkin, Jesse (2015-06-07). ["Massive Genealogy Project Shows We Are Family—Literally"](#). [The Daily Beast](#).
4. ^ ["Timeline"](#). [www.wikitree.com](#). Retrieved 2017-01-31.
5. ^ Valenzuela, Robyn (2012-07-12). ["WikiTree App Review"](#). AppAppeal. Retrieved 2014-08-15.
6. ^ ["WikiTree Homepage"](#). WikiTree. Retrieved 2017-10-30.
7. ^ ["Top 100 Genealogy Websites for 2016"](#). GenealogyInTime.com. Retrieved 1 February 2017.
8. ^ Meece, Mickey (2011-05-18). ["Finding Family History Online"](#). [New York Times](#). Retrieved 2015-07-24.
9. ^ ["Wiki Genealogist Honor Code"](#). WikiTree.com. Retrieved 2014-08-15.
10. ^ Komando, Kim (2011-06-03). ["New Ways to Complete Your Family Tree"](#). [USA Today](#). Retrieved 2015-07-24.
11. ^ Beidler, James M. (2012-06-24). "Roots and Branches: New genealogical mantra - 'Collaboration'". [Lebanon Daily News](#).
12. ^ Seaver, Randy (2011-03-11). ["Exploring WikiTree - Post 6: Privacy Levels"](#). Geneamusings. Retrieved 2014-08-16.
13. ^ ["Pre-1500 Profiles"](#). WikiTree. Retrieved 2016-04-17.
14. ^ ["Duplicates"](#). WikiTree. Retrieved 31 March 2015.
15. ^ MacEntee, Thomas (2010-11-02). ["Interview – Chris Whitten of WikiTree"](#). GeneaBloggers. Retrieved 2014-08-16.
16. ^ ["Global Family Reunion"](#). Out:think Group. Retrieved 2014-08-16.
17. ^ ["WikiTree Blog"](#). WikiTree.
18. ^ Cooper, Kitty (2013-12-28). ["Finding common ancestors with automation: Compare GEDcoms or use one world tree"](#). Open Sky Web

Design. Retrieved 2014-08-15.

19. ^ *Eastman, Dick (2014-06-26). ["WikiTree Announces DNA Ancestor Confirmation Aid"](#). Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter. Retrieved 2014-08-16.*
20. ^ *Fryxell, David A. (2014-08-01). ["Best Social Media Websites for Genealogy"](#). [Family Tree](#). Retrieved 2015-07-24.*
21. ^ *["WikiTree"](#). [ISOGG Wiki](#). [International Society of Genetic Genealogy](#). Retrieved 2014-10-24.*

External links

- [Official website](#)