



Connecting Families and Collecting Cousins Keys to Successful Collaboration

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Assertion: The best way to move forward on your family history is to create a team of researchers who share a common interest in your family lines. This means collaborating with **family**.

To collaborate with others, we must overcome fear and trepidation—fear of not being liked or not having our research validated.

This presentation covers the following elements of collaboration:

- Best Practices
- Examples
- Online Collaboration Options
 - Family Trees
 - DNA
 - Message Boards and Inquiries

Mnemonic for Collaboration: I SEEK

I Invest
S Share
E Engage
E Evaluate
K Kind

Invest

- Take time to understand.
- Show genuine interest in others.
- Spend time answering questions and helping others.

Share

- What you know and how
- Who you are and why you care
- Stories, photos, and other evidence
- Only share what is appropriate (respect privacy)

Engage

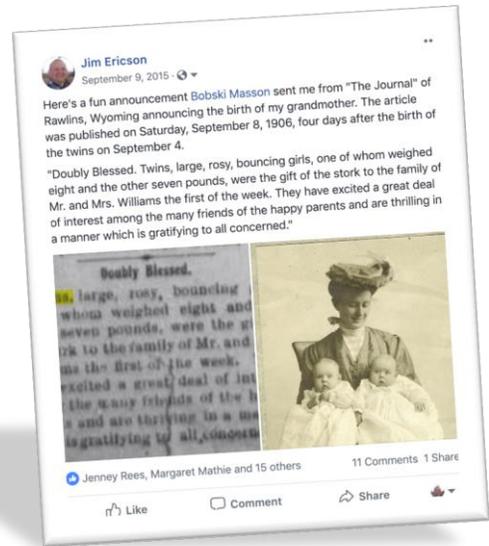
- Ask questions
- Reply promptly
- Think deeply
- Demonstrate interest

Evaluate

- Keep an open mind.
- Review documents and sources.
- Collaborate on theories and evidence.
- Articulate your reasoning.

Kind

- Avoid what may be perceived as a critical or accusatory tone, especially with questions.
- Be generous and patient with others.
- Develop deeper relationships – this is FAMILY.
- Refer to evidence and theories and avoid condescension or personal attacks.



Methods of Collaboration

Method	Pros	Cons	Biggest Application	Before You Start
TREES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet unknown relatives • Collaborating directly in family tree • Context of person and tree available • Shared sources, photos, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborating directly in family tree (Whoops! factor) • May be a lot of work if collaborating across trees and services • Still need to validate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with knowledgeable cousins to document tree for yourself and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open, kind, patient, and ready to forgive others.
DNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover unknown relatives • Validate or invalidate stories and theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited to DNA relationships • Privacy questions • Need family trees to identify relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with family to further research on specific lines, especially where relationships are unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be prepared for surprises and the need for healing
MESSAGE BOARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent • Others are interested and engaged • Great for asking specific questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can take time to validate relationships • Decreasing in popularity (less seen) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask specific research questions or find others who are researching same ancestors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See if the forum is active (most recent posts, number of responses)

Family Trees

Common Feeling: "This is all messed up. Quit messing with MY TREE!"

Types of Trees and Where to Find Them

- GEDCOM Files – Export/Import full trees (still valuable)
 - Online repositories, such as Genealogies at FamilySearch (<https://www.familysearch.com/trees>), Ancestry Trees (<https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/tree/>) or the RootsWeb WorldConnect (<https://wc.rootsweb.com/>)
- Online Trees Collections
 - Ancestry (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/42/>), MyHeritage (<https://www.myheritage.com>)
 - Can get hints and manage privacy, sharing, and other settings

- Collaborative Open Edit Trees (less common)
 - FamilySearch Family Tree (<https://www.familysearch.org/tree>)
 - WikiTree (<https://www.wikitree.com/>), OneGreatFamily (<https://www.onegreatfamily.com>), and others

Collaborating on Owned vs. Editable Trees

OWNED = Submitted or Created Online by Individuals

EDITABLE = Collaborative Trees that Anyone Can Edit

Tree Collaboration Principles

- Owned Trees
 - Make suggestions, ask questions, and request to collaborate through exchange.
 - Grafting—Watch for appropriated (or misappropriated) info.
 - Approach errors kindly.
 - Thank them for their contributions.
 - Improving the tree is up to the owner or derivative owner.
- Editable Trees
 - You ARE collaborating, so plan to work with people over time.
 - Merged—Add what you have and everyone benefits.
 - Be careful with changes, criticism, and assertions.
 - Reference sources and documentation first.
 - Improving the tree is everyone's job.

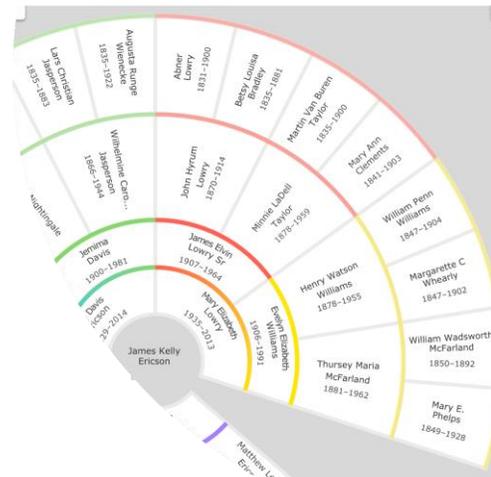
Trees are Perfect for Sharing

- Gives the gift of discovery
- Can provide evidence for conclusions
- Saves time and effort
- Updates immediately for collaboration

DNA

Before Taking the Test

- Consider your purpose:
 - Identifying birth parents
 - Collaborating on research
 - Learning ethnic background
 - Understanding genetic health risks
 - Breaking through brick walls
- Select your test
- Prepare for possible surprises and meeting new people
 - Are you prepared for anomalies or surprises?
 - Are you open to establishing new relationships or for rejection?



Many DNA Testing Options

- Select provider and test based on purpose
 - Larger providers have more data points for ethnicity and connections.
 - Differentiation is based on which tests are run in the lab and how results are provided (user experience) after getting results.

- All options have pros and cons
 - You will likely find relatives using any test that has a focus on identifying relatives. Consider multiple providers.

Learn More and Select a DNA Test

- Visit <https://www.FamilySearch.org/DNA>

After Getting Your Results

- Take time to understand results
- Triangulate relationships to understand “how” you are related to others with common DNA
- Identify relatives who can help you learn more
- Join research communities or descendant groups
- Start reaching out and collaborating

DNA Stories and Outcomes

- Understanding
- Discovery
- Heartbreak and Healing

Message boards and inquiries

- Why Message Boards and Forums?
- Connect with others doing similar research
- Persistent (Jim and Bob met through a 5-year-old post)
- More likely to find people who are engaged (many tree publishers walk away)
- Easy and low-cost approach
- Still relevant

What Forums Are (Still) Popular?

- RootsWeb
 - Message Boards: <https://boards.rootsweb.com/surname.aspx>
 - Mailing Lists: <https://mailinglists.rootsweb.com/listindexes/>
- Ancestry Message Boards: <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/>
- GenForum on Genealogy.com (appears to be read only): <https://www.genealogy.com/forum/>
- Many others, but most are not as popular