



AGS Ezine

Newsletter of the Arkansas Genealogical Society Vol. 18 No. 1 May 2023

Leisa Horness, editor

Coming Events ---

32nd North Arkansas Ancestor Fair

Marshall, AR

June 2-3, 2023

www.ancestorfair.us

Arkansas Scottish Festival

Batesville, AR

Oct. 27-29, 2023

www.arscottishfest.com

Artificial Intelligence and Genealogy

by Scott Lee

If you have been paying attention to the news lately, you have likely heard about ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot. You may not have heard that the software it's based on, GPT, was upgraded in March from GPT-3.5 to GPT-4. This upgraded version is only available in the paid version of ChatGPT, but I have found that it is a huge improvement.



ChatGPT is still not trained specifically for genealogy, but it can answer general questions and even give reasonable suggestions for places to research (sometimes). If you use it, please keep in mind that it doesn't "understand" in the same way humans do. It sometimes gives excellent answers and sometimes gives ridiculous answers. Always take its answers with a grain of salt.

The upgraded GPT-4 shows how rapidly AI is evolving. I have been using it to write software for a website that the Arkansas Genealogical Society (AGS) will soon use to list genealogy clubs, museums, and libraries in Arkansas. It will also have a calendar of events these organizations hold. This new version of GPT produces much better software with fewer bugs. I am amazed at its ability to understand my specifications and generate code in seconds that would take me hours or days to write. The code is usually high quality but occasionally has a few silly mistakes. I spend most of my time writing specifications, testing, and debugging. With its help, the website is well over half done in a fraction of the time it would have taken me without it.

Artificial Intelligence and Genealogy

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By Scott Lee

Even though ChatGPT is not trained on genealogy, the quality of its answers and its ability to understand very complex situations leads me to believe that this type of technology may be picked up by one of the big genealogy companies with the resources to train it properly. They could feed it all available source material, including census records, birth, marriage, and death certificates, court documents, military records, etc.

At that point, genealogy will truly move into the twenty-first century.

Some of the benefits such software could provide are:

- Analyzing your tree to find mistakes and family connections that are not justifiable by the source documents.
- Reading old handwritten documents, transcribing them, and generating an index.
- Translating to another language easily.
- Being better than humans at deciphering blurred and improperly exposed images.
- Being better at reading sloppy handwriting because it can analyze all of a person's writing across multiple pages.
- Because it can process massive quantities of information, it could read every page of every newspaper in a region looking for articles related to your family.
- Can't find your ancestor in one of the censuses? AI could scan every page from every state and list all possible matches in order or probability.

If you would be interested in having a presentation on this topic for your organization, visit www.ArGenSoc.org/presentations. AGS offers this and other topics at no charge.

Arkansas Genealogy Society Announces Speakers for 2023 Fall Conference

The Arkansas Genealogy Society is pleased to announce the speakers for the 2023 Fall Conference. The event will be virtual and free to anyone who registers. This year we will feature two professional genealogists.

The morning session speaker will be Lori Thornton, who specializes in Southern States genealogy and religious records.

Lori's topics will be:

- Deep Southern Roots: Alabama and Mississippi Ancestors
- North Carolina Research From The Comfort Of Home

In the afternoon, Paula Stuart-Warren, an internationally recognized genealogy educator is the presenter. She concentrates on Native American research along with a wide variety of other topics.

Paula's topics will be:

- Tho' They Were Poor, They May Have Been Rich in Records
- The U.S. National Archives: The Nations Attic

Paula Stuart-Warren focuses on unusual resources, manuscripts, methodology, and analyzing records. She also specializes in Native American genealogical research.

The AGS Conference will be a zoom event on Saturday, October 14th starting at 9:00 a.m. Registration is required for the event. We will publish a link at argensoc.org as soon as it is available.

2023 North Arkansas Ancestor Fair

Yes, there will be an Ancestor Fair in 2023. The Searcy County Historical Society is preparing to host the 32nd North Arkansas Ancestor Fair Friday and Saturday, June 2 and 3, 2023 in Marshall, Arkansas.

Sometimes described as a place to brag on your ancestors, it is a gathering of family genealogists and historians—and just plain interested folks—to share their genealogical and historical information—and old family stories—about families and communities.

Historical/genealogical societies, libraries and descendant organizations help researchers (or seekers) with information not commonly found on the Internet. Visitors from all over the country learn from locals about their forefathers. In 2022, a man from Hawaii met the daughter of his father's best friend.

Many visitors start a day or two earlier at the expansive genealogical/historical section of the Searcy County Library. The Ancestor Fair program begins Friday evening, June 2, at Los Locos Mexican Restaurant at 5:30 p.m. with a Mixer-Dinner. Everyone tells the families they are interested in, or have information about, and that lets people with common interests make contact and plan the rest of the weekend.

Saturday, June 3, is the Ancestor Fair. We have been fortunate to be able to hold the Fair in a Marshall jewel—the Veterans Memorial Hall. The Hall is open at 7:00 a.m. for people and organizations to set up their tables. Tables and chairs are provided free and choice of location in the Hall goes to first arrivals.

At 9:00 a.m. The doors open to the public to visit the information providers. Doors close at 3:00 p.m. and the North Arkansas Ancestor Fair is almost over.

A new feature has been added to this year's Ancestor Fair. The new, award winning Buffalo River Historic Jail and Museum will be open after the Fair for tours and special events. If one's ancestor ended up in jail after a wild weekend, one can see the facilities where he stayed.

The North Arkansas Ancestor Fair is truly where one learns about the forefathers from people who know.

32nd North Arkansas Ancestor Fair
June 2-June 3, 2023
Marshall, Arkansas



Schedule of Events:

Friday, June 2: Mixer Dinner

5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Los Locos Restaurant, Marshall

234 Highway 65N

(order individually from menu, meet kin, get early start on research)

Saturday, June 3: Ancestor Fair

Veterans Hall

108 Noah Horton Memorial Drive

7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.: Providers set-up

9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.: Doors open to the public.

Admission free.

Family historians, historical/genealogical societies, libraries,
and descendant organizations share information and help researchers.

Saturday, June 3: Buffalo River Historic Jail & Museum

300 South AR-27

Tours open for Ancestor Fair starting at 4:00 p.m.

www.ancestorfair.us

AGS Would Like To Hear From You!

The Arkansas Genealogical Society welcomes news, events, and comments, etc. from other genealogical groups within the state or information that is Arkansas related.

Please send your news to us at ezine@argsoc.org.

So, You Have Arkansas Roots?

Do you know that the largest published collection of Arkansas genealogical material is found in the back files of the Arkansas Family Historian, published four times a year by the Arkansas Genealogical Society?

It began publication in 1962. The back files from 1962-2016 are freely available at the society's website at <https://argsoc.org/afh/>. Each volume or issue features a full name index. Consulting these back files at the beginning of your Arkansas roots journey may facilitate your search for your hard-to-find Arkansas ancestors.

Russell P. Baker, Editor, Arkansas Family Historian

Administrative Stuff

Contributions: If you have news for the Ezine, send it to ezine@argsoc.org – Thanks!

AGS: To learn more about the Arkansas Genealogical Society, visit our website at <https://www.argsoc.org>.

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