

# The Benefits of Virtual Genealogical Organizations (or Virtual Programming)

© Katherine R. Willson (<https://virtualgenealogy.org>, <https://socialmediagenealogy.com>)

## Benefits of Virtual Programming

- Appeals to:
  - Younger audiences
  - Those with health issues (impaired vision, hearing, or mobility; immunocompromised, etc.)
  - Those with childcare conflicts
  - Those with job conflicts
  - Those with limited transportation options
  - Those with limited or no access to local genealogical societies
- Virtual programs meet the audience & speaker where they are (no travel to/from meetings, comforts of home)
- The audience can watch/listen to programs from home, at work, in the car, or while walking
- The audience can watch/listen on any device (desktop computer, laptop, tablet, cell phone)
- Recorded programs can be paused as necessary and resumed when convenient
- Virtual programs can reach larger audiences
- Virtual programs are less likely to be canceled/rescheduled due to weather or pandemic concerns
- Virtual speakers do not incur travel costs or hassles

## Virtual Meeting Equipment

- Stable internet connections (preferably an ethernet connection)
- Webcam
- Headset with attached noise-canceling microphone, or stand-alone professional microphone
- Virtual meeting platform
- Hosting site for recordings (website, YouTube, Vimeo, etc.)

## Virtual Meeting Platforms

- GoToWebinar (used by Virtual Genealogical Association and most state societies)
  - Pricing - <https://www.gotomeeting.com/webinar/pricing>
  - Create & manage an effective webinar on GoToWebinar - <https://www.gotomeeting.com/webinar/what-is-a-webinar>
  - Because I use GoToWebinar personally, I can offer additional notes: Moderator can convert attendees into panelists (including use of microphones and webcams); handouts are available in the control panel; can offer surveys and polls during the event; recording begins automatically once the broadcast starts; recordings are stored within the subscriber's GoToWebinar account; attendees pre-register for an event, then click a new link to join the live broadcast
- GoToMeeting
  - Pricing - <https://www.gotomeeting.com/meeting/pricing>
  - Introduction to basics of GoToMeeting videoconferencing - <https://www.gotomeeting.com/meeting/resources/introduction-to-basics-of-video-conferencing-for-an-online-meeting>
- Zoom
  - Pricing <https://zoom.us/pricing>
  - Quick start guide for new users of Zoom - <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360034967471-Quick-start-guide-for-new-users>
  - Allows audience members to see one another's comments in the chat; has breakout rooms

## Video Hosting

- YouTube
  - Creating a YouTube channel - <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1646861?hl=en>
  - Uploading videos to YouTube - <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/57407>

## Video Hosting (continued)

- YouTube (continued)
  - List of genealogy channels on YouTube - see 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet point under “Additional Resources” at <https://socialmediagenealogy.com/resources/>
- Vimeo
  - Pricing - <https://vimeo.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/categories/202594577-Billing-and-Membership>
  - Uploading videos to Vimeo - <https://vimeo.com/upload>

## Preparing for Virtual Programming

- Contract with speaker specifies:
  - Payment amount and method of payment (check, e-check, PayPal, Venmo)
  - Lecture title
  - Presentation date, time, and platform (speaker’s platform, or organization’s platform?)
  - Speaker’s log-in time for a tech check
  - Speaker’s phone number, in case of technical issues
  - Due date for handout
  - Permission to store recording and handout in a secure location (specify length of time of storage)

## Drawbacks of Virtual Programming

- One of the biggest drawbacks is viewer distraction
- A lack of personal interaction among attendees and with speaker
- Technical equipment/platform costs (consider sharing costs with local libraries, historical societies, or museums)
- Completely dependent on the internet

## Engage Your Audience Members

- Utilize chats, polls, and surveys
- Add informal interactions between formal programs, such as:
  - Audience members share recent successes
  - Mini-sessions on online record sets, then viewers explore records individually & report back discoveries
  - Share a brick wall in advance, challenge members to solve & share results during a virtual gathering
  - Assign a small panel the same brick wall & have them share research plans & results w/Q&A
  - Study groups working together through genealogy instruction books
- Use social media platforms to connect with members outside of formal programming

## Social Media Platforms

- <https://Facebook.com> (2.45 billion active monthly users)
  - See <https://socialmediagenealogy.com/genealogy-on-facebook-list>
- <https://Instagram.com> (photo sharing site, 1 billion active monthly users)
  - Popular genealogy hashtags include #genealogy, #familyhistory, #genealogyphotoaday, #oldphoto
- <https://Reddit.com> (discussion site, 430 million active monthly users)
  - Genealogy related news, articles, and discussions - <https://www.reddit.com/r/Genealogy>
- <https://Twitter.com> (short “tweets” or links, 330 million active monthly users)
  - Many society accounts at <https://twitter.com/search?q=genealogical%20society> (filter by People)
  - Popular genealogy hashtags include #genealogy, #familyhistory, #genealogyphotoaday, #oldphoto
- <https://Pinterest.com> (322 million active monthly users)
  - Many genealogical society accounts at <https://www.pinterest.com/search/users/?q=genealogical%20society>
  - For ideas, see Southern California Genealogical Society (<https://www.pinterest.com/california0208/boards>)
- <https://LinkedIn.com> (310 million active monthly users)
  - <https://www.linkedin.com/search/results/groups/?keywords=Genealogy>
  - <https://www.linkedin.com/search/results/groups/?keywords=family%20history>

## Creating Virtual Content for Marketing

- Suggestions for posts on an organization's social media channels:
  - Give recognition to volunteers & leadership
  - Promote upcoming programs/events (local, regional, national, virtual)
  - Share photos from programs/events
  - Promote new entries on the organization's blog
  - Share teasers about articles in the organization's newsletter/journal

## Some Current Webinar Providers (not a comprehensive list)

*Most of these livestreamed webinars are free with recordings and hand-outs restricted to members only.*

- Board for Certification of Genealogists (offered through Legacy Family Tree Webinars)- <https://bcgcertification.org/learning/skills/webinars>
- BYU Family History Library (all free) - <https://fh.lib.byu.edu/classes-and-webinars>
- FamilySearch (all free) - [https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Family\\_History\\_Library\\_Classes\\_and\\_Webinars](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Family_History_Library_Classes_and_Webinars)
- California Genealogical Society (\$45/year to join) - <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/california-genealogical-society-amp-library-5537240243>
- Florida State Genealogical Society (\$25/year to join) - <https://flsgs.org/cpage.php?pt=252>
- Georgia Genealogical Society (\$35/year to join) - <https://gagensociety.org/events/webinars>
- Germanic Genealogical Society (\$20/year to join) - <https://ggsmn.org/cpage.php?pt=94>
- Guild of One Name Studies Webinar Series (\$27-\$48/year to join) - <http://one-name.org/guild-webinar-series>
- Illinois Genealogical Society (\$40/year to join) - <https://ilgensoc.org/cpage.php?pt=227>
- Irish Genealogical Society International (\$35/year to join, cost per webinar) - <https://irishgenealogical.org/eventListings.php?nm=34>
- Legacy Family Tree Webinars (\$50/year to subscribe)- <https://familytreewebinars.com>
- Massachusetts Society of Genealogists (\$25/year to join, webinars available to members-only) - <https://www.msoginc.org/msogwp/category/education/webinars>
- Minnesota Genealogical Society (\$40/year to join) - <https://mngs.org/eventListings.php?nm=38>
- New England Historic Genealogical Society (\$95/year to join) - <https://www.americanancestors.org/education/online-classes>
- New York Genealogical & Biographical Society (\$77/year to join) - <https://www.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/blog/upcoming-free-webinars>
- North Carolina Genealogical Society (\$40/year to join) - <http://www.ncgenealogy.org/webinars>
- North San Diego County Genealogical Society (\$30/year to join) - <https://nsdcgs.org/webinars>
- Ontario Genealogical Society (\$63/year to join) - <https://ogs.on.ca/webinars-2020>
- Orange County California Genealogical Society (\$32/year to join) - [https://occgs.com/mtg\\_event/calendar.html](https://occgs.com/mtg_event/calendar.html)
- Southern California Genealogical Society (\$40/year to join) - <http://scsgsgenealogy.com/webinar/jes-index.html>
- Utah Genealogical Association (\$35/year to join) - <https://ugagenealogy.org/eventListings.php?nm=626>
- Virtual Genealogical Association (\$20/year to join, webinars available to members only) - <https://virtualgenealogy.org/programs>

## Some Upcoming Virtual Conferences (not a comprehensive list)

- Jul 31-Sept 30, 2020 - Celtic Connections (\$99) - <http://celtic-connections.org>
- Aug 7-8, 2020 - Texas State Genealogical Society Virtual Conference (\$50-\$70) - <https://www.txsgs.org/2020-virtual-conference-registration>
- Aug 10-13, 2020 - International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies' Conference (\$250-\$325) - [https://s4.goeshow.com/iajgs/annual/2020/registration\\_form.cfm](https://s4.goeshow.com/iajgs/annual/2020/registration_form.cfm)
- Sep 2, 2020 - Federation of Genealogical Societies Conference (packages ranging from \$130-\$425) - <https://fgs.org/conferences/registration>
- Sep 10-30 - New York State Family History Conference (packages ranging from \$115-\$325) - <https://nysfhc.newyorkfamilyhistory.org/register>
- Sep 23-25, 2020 - We Are Cousins Conference on South Texas and Northeastern Mexico Genealogy (\$100-\$125) - <https://wacconference.com/register>

### Some Upcoming Virtual Conferences (continued)

- Oct 8-10, 2020 - Minnesota Genealogical Society's North Star Conference (\$75-\$100) - <https://mngs.org/cpage.php?pt=98>
- Oct 14-17, 2020 - Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society Conference (packages ranging from \$25-\$210) - <https://web.cvent.com/event/375a05f9-62b5-4829-80c7-5560766e1286/summary>
- Oct 24, 2020 - Illinois State Genealogical Society Conference (cost unavailable as of 23 July 2020) - <https://ilgensoc.org/cpage.php?pt=587>
- Nov 13-15, 2020 - Virtual Genealogical Association (\$59-\$79) - <https://virtualgenealogy.org/annual-conference>

### Some Upcoming Virtual Institutes (not a comprehensive list)

- Oct 12-14, 2020 - Virtual British Institute - <https://www.isbgfh.com/BRITISH-INSTITUTE>
- Jan 10-15, Jan 24-29, and Feb-Apr, 2021 - Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy and Academy - <https://slig.ugagenealogy.org/index.php>
- Institutes that have already occurred virtually are the Genealogical Research Institute of Pittsburgh (<https://www.gripitt.org>), the Midwest African American Genealogy Institute (<http://www.maagiinstitute.org>), and the Institute of Genealogy and Historic Research (<https://ighr.gagensociety.org>).

### Looking for Speakers?

- Association of Professional Genealogists - <https://www.apgen.org/directory>
- Board for the Certification of Genealogists - <https://bcgcertification.org/directory>
- Genealogical Speakers Guild - <https://www.genealogicalspeakersguild.org/directory-of-members>
- Geneawebinars' Virtual Speakers list - <http://blog.geneawebinars.com/p/virtual-speakers.html>
- International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists - <https://www.icapgen.org/professionals>

### Additional Virtual Education

- Ancestry Academy - <https://www.ancestryacademy.com/browse>
- Family Tree Magazine courses - <https://www.familytreemagazine.com/course>
- Federation of Genealogical Societies Past Conference Recordings - <https://www.fleetwoodonsite.com/index.php?cPath=299>
- Genealogy Podcasts - see bottom of list at <https://socialmediagenealogy.com/resources>
- National Genealogical Society courses - <https://www.ngsgenealogy.org/genealogy-courses>
- National Archives Virtual Genealogy Fair (since 2013) - <https://www.archives.gov/calendar/genealogy-fair>
- National Genealogical Society's Past Conference Recordings - <https://www.playbackngs.com>
- RootsMOOC: Intro to Genealogy and Family History Research - <https://statelibrary.ncdcr.gov/ghl/genealogy/roots-mooc>
- RootsTech Conferences Video Archive - <https://www.rootstech.org/video-archive>
- The National Archives U.K. Webinars - <https://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/category/family-history>
- YouTube Genealogy Channels - see bottom of list at <https://socialmediagenealogy.com/resources>

### Additional Resources

- Conference Keeper - <https://conferencekeeper.org>
- Cyndi's List - Online Courses & Webinars - <https://www.cyndislist.com/education/online-courses-and-webinars>
- Eastman's Online Genealogy Newsletter - Webinars & Podcasts - <https://blog.eogn.com/category/webinars-podcasts>
- Geneawebinars - <http://blog.geneawebinars.com>
- Jason Hewlett's "7 Essentials For Making The Most of Your Virtual Attendee Experience" - [https://jasonhewlett.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HOW-CAN-A-VIRTUAL-EVENT-BE-BETTER-THAN-IN-PERSON\\_-4.pdf](https://jasonhewlett.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HOW-CAN-A-VIRTUAL-EVENT-BE-BETTER-THAN-IN-PERSON_-4.pdf)