TRENDS IN GENEALOGY

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Changing Landscape

- Continued growth in interest in genealogy/family history – more money being spent – more investments being made
- More sources are being digitized; more specialized sources are being made available; records becoming more widely available
  - Moravian records – moravianarchives.org
- Spawning new businesses
  - “Germanology Unlocked” brand – webinars/consultants for transcribing old German documents and handwriting. https://germanologyunlocked.com/
- How we consume information is broadening
  - ebooks, podcasts, virtual learning
  - Mobile apps for creating, viewing, editing family trees
- RootsTech has become a “must attend” conference – March 2026 (millions from over 200 countries)
- AI is quickly making things that were hardly thinkable 10 years ago possible

Evolution of Research

- Average Guild of One Name Studies practitioner is well over 65+
- What they do with their websites is impressive – searchable databases behind their user interfaces.
- Now they are quickly bringing use of AI into their toolkit

Evolution of Research

- With so much more data coming at us from all directions, need to become far more organized
- Keep track of where you are, what you have looked at, what conclusions you have drawn
  - Bookmark online articles; OneNote, Evernote, Zotero, Microsoft Edge Collections.
  - Use WayBackMachine when old bookmarks no longer work.
- Develop and write down your research plans.
- Upskilling – **https://conferencekeeper.org;** National Genealogical Society (GRIP); Society of Genealogists (UK)
  - PodCasts: Family History AI Show EP 41 (Apr 2026) (for over 2 years - 2 Jun 2024) Mark Thompson and Steve Little

Evolution of Research

- AI transcribing tools - **https://www.transkribus.org/kurrent-transcription**
- All FamilySearch records should be run through Full Text Search by end of 2026.
- FamilySearch Research Assistant
- FamilySearch Computer Generated trees (**https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/genealogies/submissions?f.collectionId=10000130**)

Evolution of Research

- MyHeritage working with AI – scribe AI – button adjacent to records or images – gives a description and research and analysis of records (who, what, where, when, why) – highlighting genealogically relevant info. Gives a report – potential research efforts.
- Fold 3 (Ancestry.com) – American Patriot pension files - Full text search March 2026 – 2.3 mm records.
- Claude for Excel – AI within excel (now Microsoft products have Copilot use across them)
- FamilyTreeDNA, next generation sequencing microarray for ADNA 9-10% of genome vs. 0.2% for past 10 years. Triangulate groups in ADNA, with more DNA about differences, better mapping – order of common ancestors that match to) 400x more data.

AI tools

- ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google), Perplexity, Claude (Anthropic), Copilot (MS)
- Transcribe, summarize, edit photos, translate languages
- For articles, I used ChatGPT. Need to proof the work, simplify the request. Long articles had to break up. Used up the free allocation (number and timeframe)
- Use little steps, test the limits of the tools. Some things take multiple steps. Transkribus – transcribes foreign language but then need a different tool to translate.

Evolution of Research

AI Naughty & Nice List (family history)

Naughty

- It does not give you the maiden name of your 3rd great grandmother
- Works best in short conversations
- Makes things up

Nice

- Finding stuff in other stuff
- Explains complicated things
- Summarizes content
- “Exquisite at evaluating words around”
- Can almost stop prompt engineering for the natural language approach

Evolution of Research

Predictive AI

- Automation simplifies decision making & amplifies failures
  - Kidney transplant matching
  - Incentive to game the system
  - Allstate insurance increased rates for people aged over 62 (age discrimination)
- Built on the assumption: similar people will act the same in the future
  - COMPAS predicts if a crime defendant will skip trial or re-offend
  - Predictions may be accurate if no variables change (people are a wildcard)
- Overautomation
  - Michigan incorrectly collected 21 million $ for welfare fraud
  - Netherlands algorithm to detect welfare fraud (2013-19) based on nationality

Evolution of Research

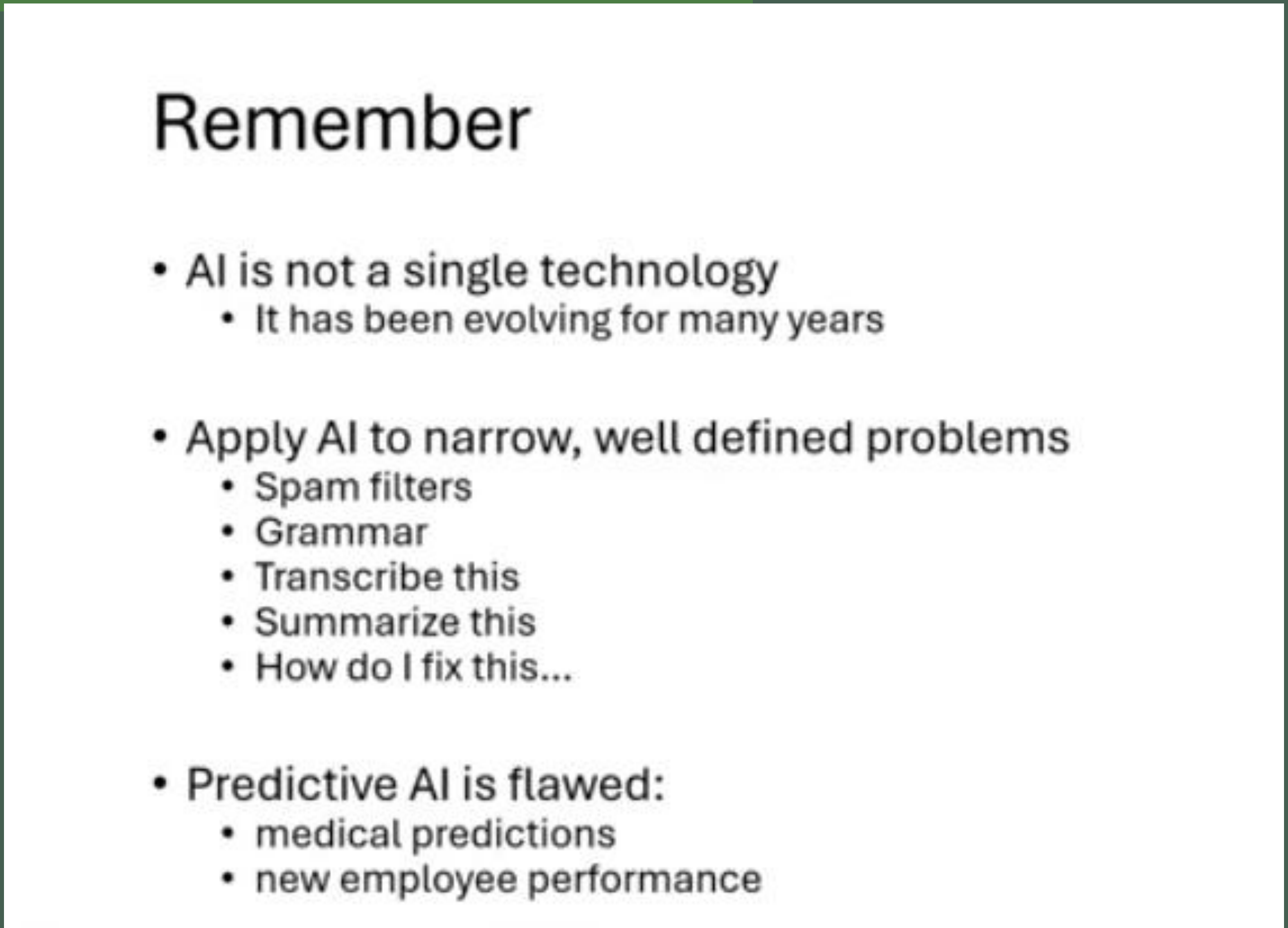
Generative AI

Generates content

- Text; images; videos; audio; & other content

- Uses training data (existing content) to create new content in response to prompts/instructions

Evolution of Research



Remember

- AI is not a single technology
  - It has been evolving for many years

- Apply AI to narrow, well defined problems
  - Spam filters
  - Grammar
  - Transcribe this
  - Summarize this
  - How do I fix this…

- Predictive AI is flawed:
  - medical predictions
  - new employee performance

Evolution of Research

AI Naughty & Nice List (general)

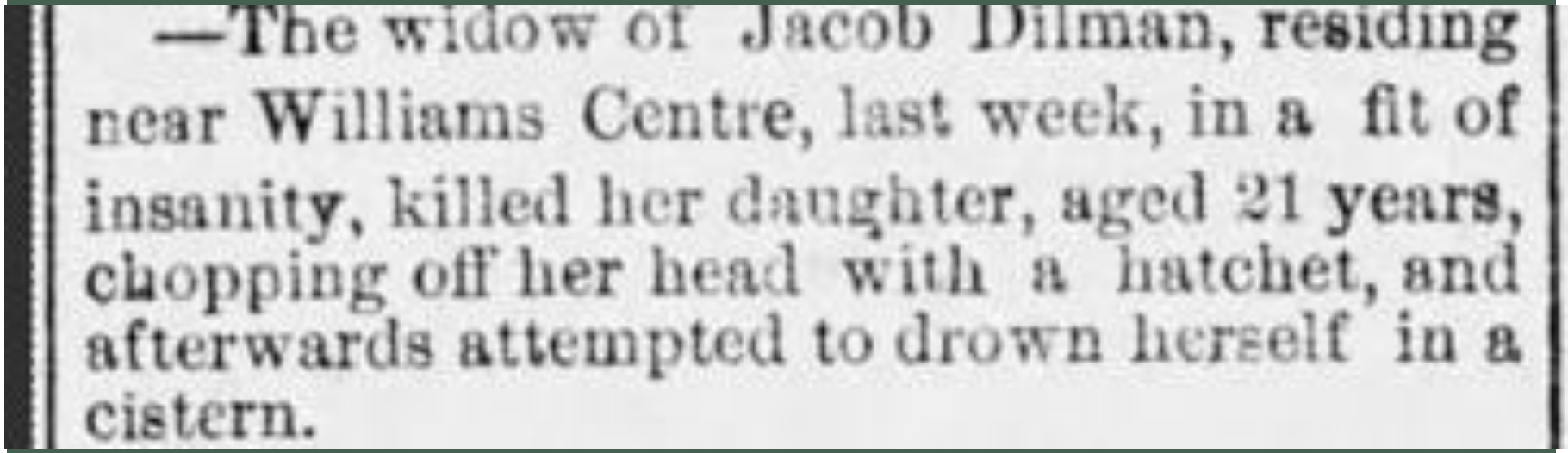
Naughty

- AI generated disinformation reduces quality of internet
- "Gold Rush" stage with companies willing to cut corners
- Reflects biases & stereotypes in the training data

Nice

- Easily accessible to all
- Can simplify tasks
- 24/7 tech support
- Transcription assistant

Examples: 1



—The widow of Jacob Dilman, residing near Williams Centre, last week, in a fit of insanity, killed her daughter, aged 21 years, chopping off her head with a hatchet, and afterwards attempted to drown herself in a cistern.

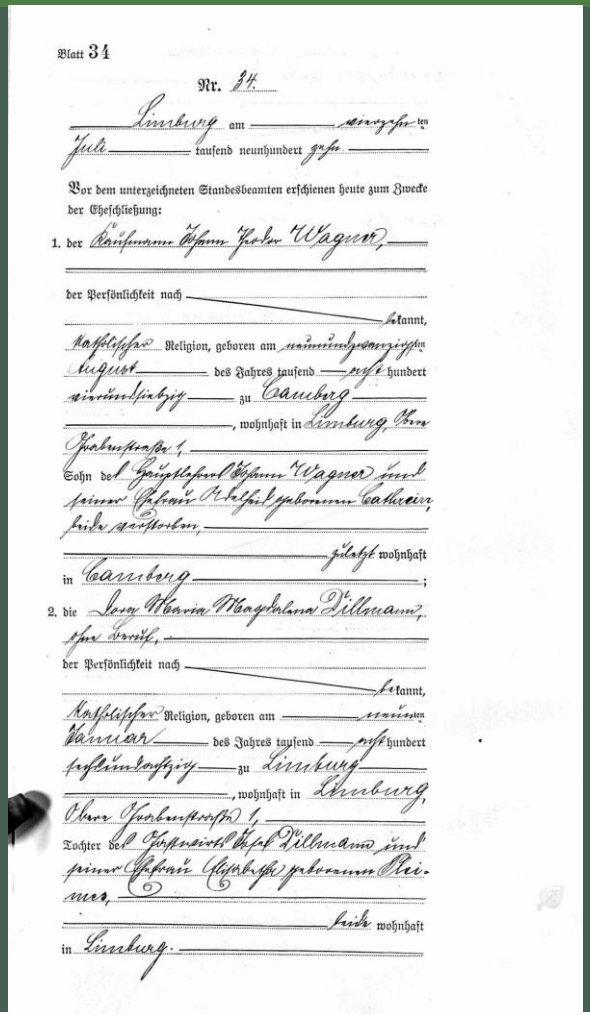
Take article copy from Newspapers.com and paste into ChatGPT

Examples: 1

Result was:

- **The widow of Jacob Dilman, residing near Williams Centre, last week, in a fit of insanity, killed her daughter, aged 21 years, chopping off her head with a hatchet, and afterwards attempted to drown he/rself in a cistern.**

Examples: 2



Blatt 34

Nr. 34

Limburg am [illegible]
Juli tausend neunhundert [illegible]

Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschienen heute zum Zwecke der Eheschließung:

1. der Bäckermeister Johann Peter Wagner,
der Persönlichkeit nach bekannt,
katholischer Religion, geboren am [illegible]
August des Jahres tausend neunhundert einundsiebzig zu Camberg,
wohnhaft in Limburg, Obere Grabenstraße 1,
Sohn des Bäckermeisters Johann Wagner und seiner Ehefrau Adelheid geborenen Catherein, beide verstorben,
zuletzt wohnhaft in Camberg;
2. die Lehrerin Maria Magdalena Dillmann,
ohne Beruf,
der Persönlichkeit nach bekannt,
katholischer Religion, geboren am [illegible]
Januar des Jahres tausend neunhundert siebenundsiebzig zu Limburg,
wohnhaft in Limburg, Obere Grabenstraße 1,
Tochter des Kaufmanns Josef Dillmann und seiner Ehefrau Elisabeth geborenen Reimers,
beide wohnhaft in Limburg.

Take a marriage record from Limburg, Germany from Ancestry.com and upload into Transkribus.com

Examples: 2

Result was:

- **Blatt 34**
- **Nr. 34.**
- **Vierzehn Limburg av Julirausend neunhundert zehü Vor dem unterzeichneten Standesbeamten erschienen heute zum Zwecke der Eheschließung:**
- **2. der Kaufmann Johann Theoder Waguer, der Persönlichkeit nach bekannt Katholischer Religion, geboren am neunundzwanzigs August des Jahres tausend aist hundert vierundsiebzig Oamberg wohnhaft in Linburg, Obere Grabenstraße 1, Sohn det Hauptlehrers Johann Wagner und seiner Ghefrau Adelheit geborenen Cathrein, beide verstorben, —zuletzt wohnhaft Camberg-**
- **2. Sie Dora Maria Magdalena Dillmann,**
- **ohne Beruf, der Persönlichkeit nach nommen bekannt nemmer Matholischer Religion, geboren am Jannar—des Jahres tagsend nichthundert sechsundachtzig Lunburg wohnhast in Leinburg Obere Grabenstraße 1, Lochter des Gastwirts Josef Willmann und seiner Ehefrau Elisabetha geborenen Sleimes, feide wohnhaft in Limburg.**
- **Form. B.**

Now what? Put this text in ChatGPT to translate!

Examples: 2

Result was:

Sheet 34

No. 34

Fourteen

Limburg on the fourteenth of July, one thousand nine hundred and ten.

Before the undersigned registrar appeared today for the purpose of marriage:

1. The merchant **Johann Theodor Wagner**,
personally known,
of the **Catholic** religion, born on the **twenty-ninth of August, one thousand eight hundred and seventy-four**, in **Camberg**,
residing in **Limburg, Obere Grabenstraße 1**,
son of the headmaster **Johann Wagner** and his wife **Adelheit**, née **Cathrein**,
both deceased,
last residing in **Camberg**.

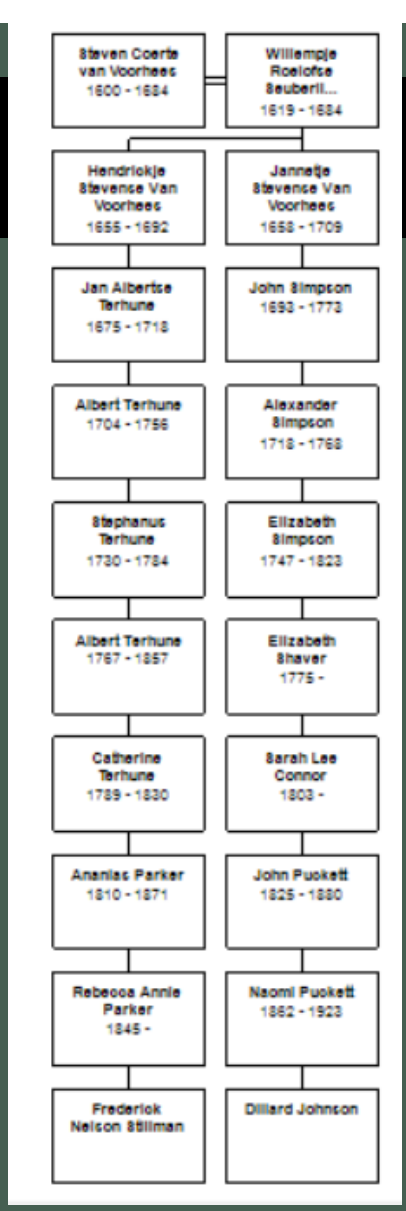
2. Dora Maria Magdalena Dillmann,
without occupation,
personally known,
of the **Catholic** religion, born on the **[day omitted] of January, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-six**, in **Limburg**,
residing in **Limburg, Obere Grabenstraße 1**,
daughter of the innkeeper **Josef Dillmann** and his wife **Elisabetha**, née **Sleimes**,
both residing in **Limburg**.

Examples: 3

Take screenshot of “Relatives Near Me” and put into ChatGPT. Ask it to create a GEDCOM file.

Examples: 3

Import GEDCOM into your fav genealogy program. Create a Family Tree report.



Examples: 4

Give ChatGPT the DFA website address www.dillmanfamilyassociation.org and ask it how many Dillman families live or lived in Ohio.

Conclusions

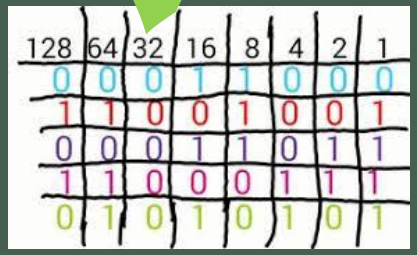
- The uses of AI in genealogical research are wide and varied
- The tasks that can be assigned to AI are increasing rapidly
- The more you make use of AI, the easier it becomes
- Always need to verify the results

Migration Records Project

Phase I – Web scraping (data harvesting)

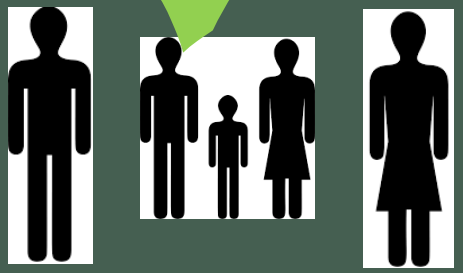
May – July 2019

Phase II – Formatting (data manipulation)



July – Dec 2019

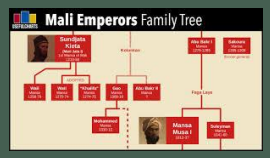
Phase III – Discovering Individuals



Dec 2019 – Dec 2020

Phase IV – Group into Families

Group 19



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Group 201

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Group 2xx

Jan 2021– mid 2027