Please submit news articles or ideas for articles to the editor. Questions about Genetic Genealogy can always be sent to the editor.

Project News

It's November, which means the month of Thanksgiving for those of us who live in the USA. We have been experiencing a colder-than-average autumn out here in the wilds of Colorado, accompanied by quite a bit of early snow. Br-r-r-r!

There are several different commercial companies that offer DNA testing for genealogical purposes to the general public. The oldest and biggest of these is Family Tree DNA (FTDNA), which is the company that hosts one of the websites for our Phillips DNA Project. However, there are other reputable companies that offer DNA tests. Some of these companies include Ancestry.com, DNA Heritage, Ethnoancestry, and Oxford Ancestors. In addition, there is a non-profit organization called Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation (SMGF) that used to offer free DNA tests, although it no longer does so. In 2007, the principals at the Sorenson companies launched GeneTree, a commercial company that provides a way for the public to utilize the SMGF DNA databases for a fee.

The National Geographic Genographic Project in partnership with FTDNA also offers a 12 marker yDNA test for $99. The Genographic Project is a five-year research effort to map how humankind populated the earth. The Genographic Project by definition is more oriented toward anthropology than genealogy. If the kit number of a participant begins with an "N", this means he obtained his DNA test through the National Geographic Genographic Project. If you want to contribute to the research and add your DNA to the Genographic Project, you can join it for $15 from your personal page at FTDNA by clicking on the tab that says Genographic Project.

Since there are different companies that offer yDNA testing, it is possible not everyone who shares your yDNA will test with the same company. If your yDNA is only being compared with members of your surname project or only with people who tested with the same company, it is likely you will never find out about those other people who match your yDNA. Searchable, public databases attempt to address this problem. I am aware of four searchable, public yDNA databases that do not require you to pay anything or open an account with them in order to conduct searches:

Ysearch (sponsored by Family Tree DNA)
http://www.ysearch.org/
58,792 surnames
59,898 unique haplotypes
78,365 individual records

Ybase (sponsored by DNA Heritage)
http://www.ybase.org/
11,276 surnames
15,181 haplotypes

SMGF (Sorensen Molecular Genealogy Foundation)
http://www.smgf.org/
33,000+ Y-DNA records
64,000+ MtDNA records

YHRD (Institute of Legal Medicine, Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin)
http://yhrd.org/index.html
79,147 haplotypes, 96 countries represented

In addition to searching for yDNA matches, you can actually add your yDNA values and your name and email address for free to the first two databases, Ysearch and Ybase. This is useful, because it means other researchers can contact you if they discover they match your DNA. You can also set up a free account at Ancestry.com and manually add your DNA results to their database, if you did not originally test with them. Matches will be able to contact you (and vice versa) through the somewhat cumbersome Ancestry.com mail service.

You cannot add your results to the SMGF database, but it is still online and searchable. Also, if you obtained a free DNA test from SMGF in the past, you can set up a paid account at GeneTree to "unlock" your DNA results in the SMGF database and contact your matches in their database. "Unlocking" your DNA results means you will receive your DNA profile, a personalized DNA report explaining your results, and a haplogroup prediction indicating your deep ancestral roots.

YHRD is an anonymous database developed for the forensic community and is not particularly useful to genealogists. However, out of curiosity, you may want to enter your yDNA results to see if you have a rare or a more common haplotype.

If you have not done this already, I recommend that you add your results to the two open yDNA databases (Ysearch and Ybase) and that you set up a free account with Ancestry.com and add your DNA results to their database. I also recommend that you search all the online databases from time to time to look for new matches that may have appeared. If you have any trouble doing any of this, please feel free to contact us for help. Some of these databases are not intuitive or easy to navigate unless you are pretty internet-savvy. If you find any matches in other databases, please invite them to join our free Phillips DNA Project and be sure to let us know about it.

Questions and Answers

Question: Do you have to have a paid subscription to Ancestry.com in order to enter your DNA values by hand into their database to see if you have any DNA matches?

Answer: No. Access to Ancestry.com's DNA database is free, but you must register and set up a DNA account. While other companies may not test all the same exact markers, you can add results obtained from other companies and compare them with others in the Ancestry.com database. Go to http://dna.ancestry.com/welcome.aspx. Close to the bottom of the page on the right you will see the following words in brown: Transfer Results From Other Lab. Click on those words. That will take you to a page where you can register and set up an account.

Question: I set up an account with Ancestry.com and entered my DNA values, but now I would like to add some more markers and can't figure out how to do it.

Answer: Here is how to edit and/or add more markers. Log in to Ancestry.com and sign in to your account. Click on DNA located in the top bar on the right hand side. On the next page that comes up, click on the brown View DNA button on the left hand side of the page. On the next page that comes up, click on Edit Results Here under Page Tools on the right hand side of the page. On the next page that comes up, you can add or change your marker values then click the Submit button at the bottom of the page.

Question: I was tested by both FTDNA and Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation. I recently went back to look at my DNA results with SMGF and I could not make heads or tales of it. Would you mind looking at my results and telling me what it means and if I match anyone else in their database?

Answer: The SMGF database is hard to use. If you do a general search on Phillips, the results do not give you any values for your markers. It only shows you which of the default markers you match and which of the default markers you mismatch. Instead, try entering your values for your first 12 markers from FTDNA and search on that instead. If you do that, you will see you only match yourself and one person named Fitzhugh in the entire SMGF database.

Question: I found a DNA match in the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation database and would like to know if there is a way to make contact with him.

Answer: Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation transferred certain rights to their database to a new commercial company called GeneTree and it is possible you might be able to make contact with your SMGF matches if you join GeneTree and set up an account. Here is a link to GeneTree: http://www.genetree.com/

Question: Is there an advantage to permanently uploading my yDNA results to Ysearch as opposed to just checking their database every so often? Boy, I sure hate all the coding you have to do now to get in. What a pain!

Answer: The advantage to uploading to Ysearch is you can post your name and email address, so if someone else is entering values and searching for matches, they can find and contact you. Also, it means you won't have to enter your values by hand every time.

Question: Why do some of the FTDNA kits begin with a letter?

Answer: FTDNA kit numbers beginning with "E" were ordered through FTDNA's European distributor. Kit numbers beginning with "M" were ordered through FTDNA's Middle Eastern distributor. Kit numbers beginning with "A" were ordered through AfricanDNA, an affiliate of FTDNA. Kit numbers beginning with "N" were ordered through the National Geographic Genographic Project, which has a partnership with FTDNA.

Featured Phillips Family Story

GEORGE AND EPHRAIM PHILLIPS, ENTREPRENEURS
By C. John Phillips
Phillips Family Group 8

Before the industrial revolution, Birmingham was a small village surrounded by many other similar villages. Some were large enough to support regular markets and fairs where goods were bought and sold. Our Phillips were represented in most parishes and were beginning to find marriage partners from further afield. After the industrial revolution which started nearby at Ironbridge, Birmingham grew quickly to be the largest industrial city in the empire and many of the villages became suburbs. Unlike most large cities, Birmingham is not on a navigable river and therefore labourers were brought in mainly from Ireland to build canals (known locally as cuts). The result is now Birmingham has more canals than Venice.

One of our ancestors in Phillips Family Group 8 is George Phillips, my great great grandfather, who was born in 1817. Like most of us Phillips, he saw an opportunity and built an Inn known as the Breedon Cross on the side of the main cut linking Birmingham with Worcester, which was on the River Severn and having access to Bristol and the Sea. Many barges and fast fly boats would have passed his door daily. George with his wife Elizabeth Smart Allen had seven children, one of whom was Ephraim born in 1850.

Not only was George a publican but he also was a part time bayonet maker. The empire was expanding rapidly and needed bayonets to fit onto the many guns made nearby by companies such as the Birmingham Small Arms Company (BSA) at their Enfield factory. George's son Ephraim was surrounded by the trappings of industry and started work locally at the age of 8. Like many others, by his teens he was working from home in an attic, subcontracting to many of the larger firms around. This was a boom period. Birmingham was the headquarters of seven of the world's largest companies and goods were exported all over the World. Mr. Cadbury was starting his chocolate factory, Mr. Dunlop his tyre company, Mr. Webley and Mr. Scott their gun company.

Our Ephraim was as ambitious as his neighbours. Without any capital and based just on his engineering knowhow, he rented part of factory. By 1880, at the age of 30, he bought a shop on the site of the present factory in Bissell Street, Birmingham. The business grew and he bought the surrounding land, building the current factory which grew to supply the cold forged fasteners for the nearby car plants at Jaguar, Rover Austin, etc. His initial prosperity was based on his own design of a thread rolling machine to make screws which were exported all over the world. He died young at age 59 in 1910, still working each day at his factory which by now employed 200 people. His legacy, the building, is now an office block available on the Internet if you need premises. I wonder how many more of us Phillips have left our legacies in bricks and mortar?

Guest Column

The following article has been excerpted from the October 26, 2009 Volume 8, Issue 3 of Facts & Genes, the Family Tree DNA newsletter (copyright 2009, Family Tree DNA):

Oldest Known Ancestors Location for Mapping

If you have taken a Y-DNA or mtDNA test, you can gain more from your test results by entering information about your oldest direct male line or direct female line ancestor. As more people enter their information, the value of the My Maps feature increases.

With My Maps, you can see the ancestral locations of your matches. This information may provide a clue to finding your ancestral homeland, or a clue for further research.

Take a moment today to enter your most distant direct line male or direct line female ancestor information:

Log into your personal page. In the menu on the left, under My Maps, click "Plot Ancestral Locations."

Below the map you will find the entries for your most distant known paternal and maternal ancestors. If you have not made an entry before, the entries will say "No Label Saved" or "No Location Saved." To add your direct male line ancestor, click the edit button on the left. To add your direct female line ancestor, click the edit button on the right.

Enter your ancestor's name, date of birth, and date of death. Where a date is unknown, enter date unknown. This is a free form text field, so enter as much or as little information that is known.

Then click "Next Step." In step 2, you will identify the location of your most distant ancestor. You can now enter your location using natural language, such as Dublin, Ireland. You can also still enter the location by latitude and longitude. Choose either "Search by Location Name" or "Enter Latitude and Longitude". We recommend searching by location name.

You will now enter your most distant ancestor's birth place. Perhaps you only know a general area, such as Ireland, and not a specific location. This is fine, and the pin on map will go in the country.

Perhaps you don't know your ancestor's birth place, but do know where he or she married or where he or she is buried. Then in Step 1, where you entered information about your ancestor, also add a note that the location is for the marriage or for the burial. This will help the people you match when they see your ancestor's pin on their map.

Once you have entered the information for your direct male line and direct female line ancestors, click "Maps" in the menu on the left to view your matches' ancestral locations.

The color of the push pins on the map reflect how closely you match, from red for an exact match to grey for a 7 step genetic distance.

On the upper right is a button called "Map Instructions." Click on this button to get a tour and explanation of the different features of the map.

My Map is an exciting new tool which may help you in finding your ancestral location. For the tool to be very valuable, everyone needs to enter their most distant known ancestor's location. Please take a moment to do this today.

Additionally, your Group Administrator can select an option for the DNA Project web site to display the map of the location of most distant ancestors. If you are a Group Administrator, go to your Group Administration Page. Then click on Family Project Web site. This page is used to set up and maintain your web site. Move down the page, below the boxes, where you will see:

Display Ancestor's (Alleles) Map
Display Ancestor's (mtDNA) Map

Check the box to the right of the first line to display the Y-DNA most distant ancestor map. Check the box to the right of the second line to display the mtDNA most distant ancestor map.

The Group Administrator can also view a map of the most distant ancestor or of the participants' locations by going to the Group Administration Page and clicking "View Member Distribution Map."

Those who have tested are encouraged to add their most distant ancestor information today!

My Maps is an exciting step forward for all genealogists. Again, Family Tree DNA is the leader in Genetic Genealogy, consistently investing in new tools, features, and services for genealogists.

Take a few minutes today to enter the location of your oldest known direct line male ancestor and direct line female ancestor so everyone can benefit from My Maps.