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Genealogy to Go by Barbara J Starmans

With world-wide mobile traffic growing by 81% last year, it isn't surprising that experts are predicting that by the end of this year, the number of smartphones and tablets will exceed the number of people on earth! With all that power in your pocket, how can you use your smartphone or tablet to catch up on your genealogy research, whether you're stuck in a queue, waiting in the doctor's office or just on your lunch break at work? Fortunately, no matter which type of device you have, there are apps for that.

Keep your family tree at hand by loading it on your mobile or putting it online where you can view it from anywhere with apps like GedStar or RootsMagic or MobileFamilyTree. Perform searches on paid subscription apps like Ancestry to check out some of those shaky green leaves and find historical documents relating to your ancestors, or scan and upload photos to your Ancestry tree with Shoebox. Take notes on your findings with Evernote or Google's Keep and sync them to the cloud, making them easily accessible from any web browser or from your desktop or laptop later. Upload your photographs and documents to file sharing sites like Dropbox or Google Drive.

Subscribe to your favourite genealogy magazines in digital format on Zinio or catch up on the latest family history blog news with Feedly or Flipboard. Hang out on the forums with the WDYTYA Forum app and get help from hundreds of fellow genealogists to break down your brick walls, or share your knowledge on what you know best. Contribute to crowd sourcing projects using the Billion Graves app or visit your favourite genealogy pages on Facebook. And you aren't limited to only using the applications available in the Google Play Store or the iTunes App Store. Fire up your browser and access your favourite websites from your phone like FamilySearch and TheGenealogist, both optimised for mobile on your device.

Whether you only have ten minutes to spare, or whether you'll be sitting on a train for the next hour, take out your mobile and use the latest technology to take a journey to the past!

View and Search Your Family Tree

RootsMagic

iTunes: iOS 4.3 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.3.3 or later. FREE

My Rating: 4-1/2 stars – Outstanding!

This app is a free companion to the very popular RootsMagic desktop program or the free RootsMagic Essentials software for Windows and it uses your actual RootsMagic data files so there are no conversions required. Simply install the app, upload your RootsMagic file to Dropbox and follow the instructions on the screen to open your family tree.

The Good:

Screens include Pedigree, Family, Descendant and Individual views making exploring your family tree a snap. Browse your ancestors by name and view photos, notes and sources for people, families, events and facts. Access your source list, your to-do lists, your research logs, your media lists, your address book, your repository list, your correspondence list and your place list, just like in the desktop versions. Your tree can be updated at any time by uploading a new version of your desktop data to Dropbox.

The Bad:

There is currently no way to edit or enter new information into your tree in the mobile app or to take notes on your findings. (But RootsMagic says “not yet” suggesting that this might be a future enhancement).

The Bottom Line:

As promised, the RootsMagic app really does put your family tree at your fingertips and that it also allows you to view your to-do lists and research notes is a great bonus.

Ancestry

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android version varies with device. FREE

My Rating: 3 stars – Good but not great

The Ancestry application lets you search for your ancestors anytime from anywhere. Log in with your account details to use your Ancestry subscription or subscribe from within the app.

The Good:

Your Ancestry tree displays well and is easy to navigate via the touch screen. Pedigree view, individual timeline and family view are offered as well as search by name. Both people and facts can be added, changed or deleted.

The Bad:

The app only works if the user has a tree uploaded to Ancestry or wants to create one from scratch. It is not possible to search the Ancestry databases directly. App only views the hints indicated by the shaky green leaves allowing suggested records to be attached to your online tree.

The Bottom Line:

If you are a current Ancestry subscriber and have an online tree, the app offers an easy way to review and respond to the hints. Great for users of the Family Tree Maker desktop software. For serious searching, use the mobile friendly Ancestry website in your favourite browser instead.

Shoebox (by Ancestry)

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.3 and later. FREE

My Rating: 3 stars – Good but not great

The Bottom Line:

Scanning a photo is as easy as taking a picture. Good for those with old photos, an Ancestry account and online tree, but pointless otherwise.

GedStar

iTunes: not available

Google Play: Android version varies with device, FREE. Requires a companion Windows program for \$9.95 US.

My Rating: 3 stars – Good

The companion Windows program is required to convert data into a GedStar compatible file. Directly import data from The Master Genealogist or Legacy Family Tree or import a GEDCOM from other programs. Dropbox can be used to transfer the file to the app on your Android device.

The Bottom Line:

Great for users of TMG or Legacy programs and good for users of other genealogy software.

LiveHistory

iTunes: iOS 7.0 or later. iPad only. \$7.99

Google Play: not available

My Rating: 3 stars – Has promise

LiveHistory can be used as a standalone iPad app, or email a GEDCOM file to your iPad to import.

The Bottom Line:

Unique features such as a time slider and the ability to edit data make this app an interesting choice but since entry and editing is allowed, it is concerning that there does not appear to be an option to download data from the app. GEDCOM import of 200 persons took about 2 minutes so it's likely that a large tree could take quite a while.

Other Noteworthy Family Tree Apps

MyHeritage

Designed for MyHeritage.com users

iTunes: iOS 5.0 or later. iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.2 and later. FREE

Families

Designed for users of Windows Legacy Family Tree software.

iTunes: iOS 5.0 or later. iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.2 and later. FREE

Heredis

Designed for users of the new Heredis 2014 software for Windows or Mac

iTunes: iOS 4.3 or later. iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Not available

GeneDroid

Designed for users of Geni.com

iTunes: Not available

Google Play: Android 2.1 or later. FREE

Geneanet

Designed for GeneaNet.com users.

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.2 or later. FREE

FamilyBee

A GEDCOM viewer, compatible with most Windows or Mac genealogy software.

iTunes: Not available

Google Play: Android 1.5 or later. FREE trial. Full version \$9.90

World Family Tree

Designed for Geni.com users

iTunes: Not available

Google Play: Android 1.6 or later. \$6.99

MobileFamilyTree 7

Designed for MacFamilyTree users

iTunes: iOS 5.1 or later. iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. \$6.99.

Google Play: Not available

Reunion

Designed for users of Reunion 9 or Reunion 10 software on the Mac

iTunes: iOS 4.3 or later. iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. \$14.99

Google Play: Not available

In the Cloud

Evernote

iTunes: iOS 7.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android version varies with device. FREE

My Rating: 5 stars – A must have app!

The Good:

Remember anything with notes, audio, photo and web clips in Evernote, all easily searchable and shareable from your mobile device, the web, or your PC or Mac desktop or laptop with the companion software with unlimited storage.

The Bad:

The free account does have a 60 MB monthly upload limit, although that's more than enough for most users.

The Bottom Line:

Evernote does exactly what it claims. It helps you remember everything, and with its cross platform functionality, you can access it from anywhere. An excellent tool for tracking your genealogy research.

Dropbox

iTunes: iOS 7.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android version varies with device. FREE

My Rating: 5 stars – A must have app!

The Good:

Save all of your photos, videos, documents and files online easily and access them from anywhere.

The Bad:

Only 2 GB of space for free on sign up. Get more space by automatically saving photos and videos or by inviting your family and friends.

The Bottom Line:

The fastest and easiest way to get files of any type from your desktop or laptop to your phone or tablet. Great for sharing with others or as a way to back up important files online. Invaluable for family history and for everything else as well.

Other Noteworthy Cloud Apps

Similar to Dropbox:

Microsoft OneDrive

Formerly known as SkyDrive. Integrates with Microsoft Office and offers 7GB of free storage.

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 4.0 or later. FREE

Box

Offers 10GB of free storage.

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android version varies with device. FREE

Google Drive

Offers 15GB of free storage.

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android version varies with device. FREE

iCloud

Part of iOS, iCloud offers 5GB of free storage for backups, app data and documents.

iOS: iOS 7.0.3 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Not available.

Similar to Evernote:

Microsoft OneNote

Part of Microsoft Office, OneNote is now available for free for both iOS and Android.

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android version varies with device. FREE

Google Keep

Keep your notes, lists and photos in an easy to navigate magazine style interface.

iTunes: Not Available

Google Play: Android 4.0 or later. FREE

Other Cloud Apps:

BillionGraves

A crowd sourcing app for mapping photos of gravestones from cemeteries and upload them to BillionGraves.com.

iTunes: iOS 5.1 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.2 or later. FREE

Find A Grave

Search a database of more than 100 million cemeteries around the world. Find A Grave was recently purchased by Ancestry in September 2013.

iTunes: iOS 7.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Not available, but likely coming soon.

Saving Memories Forever

Winner of the RootsTech 2014 developer's challenge. Create audio recordings of your most precious family memories and upload them to secure and private storage on savingmemoriesforever.com. A limited free account is available, as well as a premium paid account.

iTunes: iOS 4.3 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.2 or later. FREE

Magazines, Blogs and Forums

Feedly

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.2 or later. FREE

My Rating: 4 stars – A great way read what is new in the genealogy world.

The Bottom Line:

Search and subscribe to all your favourite genealogy blogs and news feeds. Easily save interesting articles to your favourite 'read later' program and share with others on almost any social website.

WDYTYA Forum

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 2.0 or later. FREE

My Rating: 4 stars – A great way to chat with other genealogists

The Bottom Line:

Whether you are looking for help, want to offer it or just want to find others who want to talk about genealogy, you will find it on the WYDTYA Forums.

Other Magazine, Blog and Forum Apps

Blogs:

Flipboard

A great way to catch up on news, make Flipboard your personal magazine for genealogy.

iTunes: iOS 5.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android version varies with device. FREE

The Old Reader

Another great way to catch up on news, the old reader is a replacement for the retired Google Reader.

iTunes: Not available.

Google Play: Android 2.2 and later. FREE

Magazines:

Zinio

Subscribe to your favourite genealogy magazines, including Who Do You Think You Are?.

iTunes: iOS 6.0 or later. iPhone or iPad or iPod touch. FREE

Google Play: Android 4.0.3 and later. FREE

Pocketmags

Subscribe to your favourite genealogy magazines including Who Do You Think You Are?

iTunes: iOS 5.1 or later. iPad. FREE

Google Play: Android 4.0 and later. FREE

And don't forget to check out the App Store Newsstand in iTunes or the Google Play Newsstand in Google Play!

Boxes

Watch out!

Watch out for paid apps that offer little value. These often appear in both the Google Play store and the iTunes store as just the thing to help you with your genealogy, but provide little or no value for the money. When you are considering purchasing a paid app, always read the description thoroughly, look at the images provided and be sure to check the ratings, the reviews, and the number of installations before you buy.

Coming soon

FindMyPast will soon be releasing Capture for iPhone. Take and upload photos, record and upload audio and write and upload notes. Register at <http://www.findmypast.com/capture> to be the first to try it.

FamilySearch recently announced that they have a two mobile apps in development: Family Memories and Family Tree Viewer.

The Family Memories app will be used to take photos, write stories and record audio offline. Once connected to the internet, it will upload data to your Memories page on familysearch.org. The app will be for iOS initially and will be released for Android later.

The Family Tree viewer app being developed will initially run on Android and will work with Family Tree on familysearch.org. It will be released for beta testing at the end of March and the iOS version of the Family Tree app will be released at a later time. You can view a video of how it will work at <http://bit.ly/1dBsBjJ>.