

# HOW TO BECOME A GENEALOGIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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## ***Why Should You Become a Professional Genealogist?***

### **1. Preserving Family Heritage**

The Philippines has a rich and diverse history influenced by indigenous, Spanish, Chinese, American, and other cultures. Studying genealogy allows individuals to document and preserve their family's unique heritage before it is lost to time.

### **2. Strengthening Family Connections**

Genealogy helps families reconnect with long-lost relatives and strengthen ties between generations by understanding shared roots and ancestral stories.

### **3. Academic and Historical Contribution**

Philippine history often focuses on prominent figures, but genealogy allows for the documentation of ordinary people's lives, enriching historical narratives with local and family histories. An example is renowned Filipino genealogist Luciano Perez Rivera Santiago who has made significant scholarly contributions to our country's history and genealogy fields.

### **4. Uncovering Untold Stories**

Filipino genealogy research can reveal forgotten family histories, migration patterns, and personal stories that deserve to be remembered and shared. An example is genealogist Todd Sales Lucero who has solved the hundred-year-old mystery of then President Sergio Osmeña's unknown paternity, through genetic genealogy and paper-trail research.

### **5. Helping with Legal and Citizenship Claims**

Many Filipinos need genealogical research for legal matters such as land inheritance, probate cases, and citizenship applications (e.g., Spanish or American descent). A professional genealogist can assist in these processes. This is where I specialize in.

### **6. Contributing to Repatriation and Humanitarian Efforts**

Genealogists play a role in identifying heirs, assisting with adoption cases, and reuniting families separated by war, migration, or other circumstances.

### **7. Promoting Historical, Genealogical, and Cultural Appreciation**

Understanding one's ancestry fosters national pride and a deeper appreciation for Filipino culture, traditions, and indigenous roots. A great example is Mona Magno Veluz or "Mighty Magulang," who promotes genealogy and history through short form online video content through TikTok, Facebook, and other social media channels.

## 8. Meeting the Growing Demand for Genealogical Services

With the rise of DNA testing, online genealogical databases, and family history research interest among Filipinos worldwide, there is an increasing demand for professional genealogists.

### ***Essential Knowledge and Skills for a Genealogist***

1. **Historical Context** – A genealogist must understand the historical events, social customs, and legal systems that influenced record-keeping and family structures over time.
2. **Geography** – Knowledge of geographic locations, boundary changes, and migration patterns is essential to accurately tracing ancestral movements and family connections.
3. **Knowledge of Where Records of Genealogical Importance Are Kept (Repositories and Agencies)** – A genealogist must be familiar with archives, civil registry offices, churches, libraries, and online repositories that house valuable genealogical records.
4. **Knowledge of Philippine Record Types** – Understanding different Philippine record types, such as civil registrations, church records, census data, notarial documents, and land titles, is crucial for conducting thorough genealogical research.
5. **Language Skills** – A genealogist must develop the ability to read and interpret historical documents written in various languages, including:
  - **Spanish** – Many colonial-era records, such as church documents and government records, are written in Spanish, requiring proficiency for proper interpretation.
  - **Latin** – Catholic Church records, including baptismal, marriage, and burial records, often contain Latin phrases and abbreviations that genealogists must recognize and translate. Examples are: *S.O.* [*Sagrado Orden*] (sacred order), *V.V.* [*vidi vivam*] (I have seen it in the living state), *N.N.* [*Nomen Nescio*] (I do not know the name). *P.N.C.* [*padre no conocido*] (I do not know the father).
  - **English** – Modern Philippine records, legal documents, and genealogical sources are frequently in English, making fluency necessary for research.
  - **Regional Languages and Dialects** – Depending on the locality, genealogists may need to understand regional languages and dialects to accurately interpret indigenous sources and oral histories. Examples are the existence of these indigenous words in pre-1900 Philippine church records that are written in Spanish: *dalaga* or *daraga* (unmarried maiden, bachelorette), *baguntao* or *bagongtao* (young unmarried man, bachelor), *barangay* (indigenous word for a village), *lacandola* (when used as a title and not as a surname in canonical birth, marriage, and death entries: it means - of a noble lineage or descendant of pre-colonial Philippine rulers like Lakan Dula of Tondo).
6. **Computer Skills** – Genealogists must be proficient in using technology for research, data organization, and documentation, including:
  - **Researching Online Databases** – Utilizing search engines like Google, academic resources like Google Scholar and JSTOR, and historical newspaper archives like Newspapers.com is essential for finding supplementary records.
  - **Researching Online Genealogical Repositories** – Genealogists should be skilled in navigating digital platforms such as FamilySearch, Ancestry, Geni, and MyHeritage to access genealogical records.

- MS Office Applications – Proficiency in word processing, spreadsheets, and presentation software is vital for organizing research findings, managing data, and creating reports.

## ***Philippine Repositories and Record Holders***

1. **Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)** – The PSA is a vital resource for obtaining civil registry records such as birth, marriage, and death certificates, which serve as primary sources for tracing family histories. Records in PSA cover the 1940s to the present.
2. **National Archives of the Philippines (NAP)** – The NAP houses historical documents, including Spanish-era civil and judicial records, census reports, and notarial archives, which provide valuable insights into ancestral connections. They hold records that cover pre-1940s.
3. **Local Civil Registrar’s Office (found in City or Municipal Hall)** – This office maintains official records of births, marriages, and deaths at the municipal or city level, making it an essential stop for genealogists searching for recent family records.
4. **Land Registration Authority – Registry of Deeds** – The Registry of Deeds contains land titles and property records, which help genealogists track ancestral land ownership and reconstruct family settlements. Deed grantors may sometimes convey properties to close family members, neighbors, and friends.
5. **Cemetery Offices** – Cemetery offices keep burial records that can reveal death dates, family relationships, and sometimes even biographical details about the deceased. They have records of the plots of land in the cemetery and one may gain helpful insights about the deceased and his family by looking at the grave markers and mausoleums.
6. **Church Offices** – Many church offices maintain baptismal, marriage, and burial records, which are crucial for tracing lineage, especially before the implementation of civil registration in the Philippines.
7. **School Offices** – School offices keep student records, yearbooks, and alumni registries, which can provide genealogists with information on an ancestor’s education, residence, and even family background.
8. **University Libraries** – University libraries house historical books, academic theses, newspapers, and rare manuscripts that can provide genealogists with contextual information, biographical details, and even unpublished genealogical research on specific families or communities.
9. **FamilySearch Centers** – FamilySearch Centers, operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), provide genealogists with free access to a vast collection of digitized records, microfilms, and family history databases that may not be available online. Today, all [FamilySearch Center Resources are Accessible at all Church Meetinghouses](#). You can download the [FamilySearch Center Premium Content extension](#) and [connect to the Liahona WiFi Network](#). With the extension enabled, users can search limited-access record collections on FamilySearch.org that cannot be viewed from home. Here is a list of the premium resources available via the extension:

19th-Century British Library Newspapers	Geneanet
Alexander Street	Goldie May
American Ancestors	Irish Ancestors
Ancestry Institution (Ancestry.com)	MyHeritage Library Edition
ArkivDigital	NewspaperArchive
FamNet	Paper Trail

Findmypast	Puzzilla
Fold3	

For a detailed description of each of the above-mentioned genealogy sites, visit the Wiki page for [FamilySearch Center Portal](#).

### ***Databases for Filipino genealogy research and online family tree building***

1. [FamilySearch](#) – FamilySearch is a free genealogical platform that provides access to millions of historical records, family trees, and digitized documents, making it an invaluable tool for genealogical research. Formerly the Genealogical Society of Utah, this non-profit organization has digitized almost all canonical church records in the Philippines with the ecumenical partnership of the Roman Catholic Church. They have also partnered with government agencies in protecting historical records.
2. [Geni](#) – Geni is a collaborative family tree-building website where genealogists can connect with distant relatives, merge family trees, and trace lineages through shared research. Trees made by users are subject to verification and should be taken with a grain of salt. They are however helpful as a starting point in searching primary sources.
3. [Ancestry](#) – Ancestry is a paid genealogy service offering extensive historical records, DNA testing, and tools for building detailed family trees, making it a key resource for professional and personal research.
4. [MyHeritage](#) – MyHeritage combines advanced DNA testing with historical record databases and family tree-building tools, allowing genealogists to discover ancestral origins and connect with relatives worldwide. They have fun AI tools for old photo enhancements.

### ***Additional Tools for DNA Research and Analysis***

1. [GEDmatch](#) – GEDmatch is a powerful DNA analysis tool that allows genealogists to compare DNA test results from different companies, identify genetic matches, and use advanced tools for ancestral analysis and triangulation.
2. [DNA Painter](#) – DNA Painter helps genealogists visualize and interpret DNA matches by mapping shared segments on chromosomes, aiding in the identification of common ancestors and relationship patterns.

### ***Useful databases for researching old newspapers, obituaries, school records, gazettes, property sale announcements, Spanish period documents, research articles, digitized books, open access historical journals, etc.***

1. [Biblioteca Virtual de Prensa Histórica](#) – This Spanish digital newspaper archive provides genealogists with historical news articles, obituaries, and public notices that can offer context and personal details about ancestors.
2. [Digital archives of the Miguel de Benavides Library of University of Santo Tomas](#). – This archive contains rare books, manuscripts, and historical documents, particularly useful for tracing Filipino ancestors connected to UST and colonial-era records.

3. [Google Books](#) – Google Books offers digitized versions of historical publications, genealogical reference books, and rare sources that can aid in family history research.
4. [Hathitrust Digital Library](#) – This digital library provides access to academic and historical books, including out-of-print publications that can be valuable for genealogical research. Not accessible with a Philippine IP address.
5. [Hemeroteca Digital of Biblioteca Nacional de España](#) – This Spanish digital newspaper archive contains publications dating back centuries, which can help genealogists find news related to Filipino ancestors during the Spanish colonial period.
6. [JSTOR](#) – JSTOR provides scholarly articles, historical research, and academic papers that can support genealogical studies by offering historical context and detailed family history research methodologies.
7. [Portal de Archivos Españoles \(PARES\)](#) – PARES is Spain’s official digital archive, containing colonial-era documents, censuses, and government records that are crucial for researching Filipino ancestors with Spanish heritage.
8. [Southeast Asian Newspapers Collection of the Center for Research Libraries](#) – This collection preserves historical newspapers from Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, which genealogists can use to find obituaries, social events, and news about ancestors.
9. [University of the Philippines – Diliman Library’s open access journals and online collections](#) – The UP Diliman Library provides access to historical journals, academic research, and rare Filipino publications that can serve as valuable sources for genealogical research.
10. [Newspapers.com](#) – Newspapers.com is a vast online archive of historical newspapers that genealogists can use to find obituaries, birth and marriage announcements, and other articles that provide personal details and historical context about ancestors. Although collections in this website are mostly from the U.S. and other western countries, Filipinos are sometimes mentioned in articles and this may prove useful in connecting relationships.
11. [The Filipinas Heritage Library \(FHL\)](#) is a one-stop research center for Philippine history, culture, and biographies, housing rare books, historical documents, and digital resources essential for tracing Filipino ancestry.

## **Genealogical Software**

1. [RootsMagic](#) – RootsMagic is a powerful genealogy software that allows genealogists to build, organize, and document family trees while integrating sources, citations, and DNA results. You can generate reports and trees; and even create family books using this program.
2. [Legacy](#) – Legacy Family Tree is a feature-rich genealogy program that helps researchers manage large family trees, analyze relationships, and generate detailed reports for documentation.
3. [Ancestral Quest](#) – Ancestral Quest is a genealogy software designed for easy data entry, organization, and collaboration, with compatibility for FamilySearch and other online repositories. This program is famous among genealogical research firms.
4. [Family Tree Maker](#) – Family Tree Maker is a widely used genealogy software that synchronizes with Ancestry, allowing genealogists to create, update, and share family trees with integrated historical records and DNA connections.

## **Books and References on Filipino Genealogy Research**

1. Claveria y Zaldua, Narciso, *Catálogo Alfabético de Apellidos*, 1849; Domingo S. Abella, (Reprint with introduction, Manila: Government Printing Office, 1973).
2. Vance, Lee W. and Canon, Violeta C., *Tracing Your Philippine Ancestors* (Provo, Utah: Stevenson's Genealogical Center, 1980).
3. Santiago, Luciano P.R., "*The Art of Ancestor Hunting in the Philippines*," Monina Allarey Mercado and Leonidas V. Benesa, eds., *The Filipinas Journal of Science and Culture: Volume 2* (Manila: Filipinas Foundation Inc., 1981), p.112-121; digital images, Filipinas Heritage Library ([https://issuu.com/filipinasheritagelibrary/docs/the\\_filipinas\\_journal\\_of\\_science\\_an\\_22309efe35f5ba](https://issuu.com/filipinasheritagelibrary/docs/the_filipinas_journal_of_science_an_22309efe35f5ba)) pages 124-133.
4. Todd Sales Lucero, *The Catalogo: Narciso Claveria and Thoughts on Filipino Surnames*, (Independently published, 2020).
5. Medina, Isagani R., "*Methodology of Genealogical Research*," Miranda R. Medina, compiler, *Put-a-Putaki: Essays on Philippine Social and Cultural History* (Manila: Metro Manila Colleges, 2022).

## **Top Books and References on Professional Genealogy**

1. Board for Certification of Genealogists, *Genealogy Standards*, second edition revised (Nashville, TN: Ancestry, 2021).
2. Mills, Elizabeth Shown, editor, *Professional Genealogy: Preparation, Practice & Standards* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2018).
3. Mills, Elizabeth Shown, editor, *Professional Genealogy: A Manual for Researchers, Writers, Teachers, and Librarians* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 2001).
4. Bettinger, Blaine T., *The Family Tree Guide to DNA Testing and Genetic Genealogy* (Family Tree Books, Second Edition, 2019).
5. Ramage, Michael S., and Desmarais, Catherine B.W., *Forensic Genealogy: Theory & Practice* (National Genealogical Society, 2024).

## ***Online Education Available for Genealogy Research***

There is no Institution in the Philippines that offers formal genealogy research degree. One can take advantage of the courses offered online.

1. BYU Pathway Worldwide offers quality and affordable online genealogy education through Brigham Young University-Idaho's Family History Research Program. Their [Family History Research Certificate](#) and [Advanced Family History Research Certificate](#) are stackable to gain the [Associate of Applied Science in Family History Research](#) degree. Visit their website at [byupathway.edu](http://byupathway.edu) for more information.
2. Another university that offers genealogical degrees online or in-person is the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. Their [Genealogical, Palaeographic & Heraldic Studies program](#) is offered in three levels.
  - Postgraduate certificate
  - Postgraduate Diploma, and
  - Master of Science degree

They also offer a [PhD in History with Genealogical Studies](#).

3. You can also take advantage of the FREE MOOC (Massive open online courses) offered by University of Strathclyde through its partner, FutureLearn.com. They offer
  - [Genealogy: Researching Your Family Tree](#), and
  - [Genetic Genealogy: Researching your Family Tree using DNA](#)
4. One of the best investments an aspiring genealogist can make is to attend in-person (at a cost) or watch online (for free) the webinars and keynote sessions of the world's largest genealogical conference: [RootsTech by FamilySearch](#). Everyone can take advantage from the sessions offered whether you are a beginner, intermediate or a professional. The advancements in the genealogy field are presented to the world in this conference.
5. Another great resource is [Legacy Family Tree Webinars](#), an online platform offering expert-led genealogy webinars on various topics, including DNA research, family tree building, and historical records analysis, making it a valuable resource for genealogists of all levels. You will have access to more than 2,355 webinars and 9,259 syllabus pages. The yearly subscription of \$49.95 is worth the knowledge and techniques that you will learn from the experts in the field.

## ***Credentialing Bodies***

1. [Board of Certification of Genealogists \(BCG\)](#), based in Washington D.C., tests professional genealogists through a rigorous portfolio-based scrutiny. The passers are credentialed Certified Genealogist® (CG®).
2. The [International Commission for the Accreditation of Professional Genealogists \(ICAPGen\)](#) grants the Accredited Genealogist® (AG®) status to researchers who demonstrate expertise in specific geographical areas through rigorous testing.
3. [Register of Qualified Genealogists](#) is a UK-based organization that recognizes and supports professional genealogists who meet high academic and professional standards in genealogy.

4. [\*The Council for the Advancement of Forensic Genealogy \(CAFG\)\*](#) is a professional business league dedicated to advancing public awareness and understanding of the Forensic Genealogy profession while promoting and maintaining high standards of professional and ethical conduct.