



Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree

Megan Smolenyak , Ann Turner

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Written by two of the country's top genealogists, *Trace Your Roots with DNA* is the first book to explain how new and groundbreaking genetic testing can help you research your ancestry

According to American Demographics, 113 million Americans have begun to trace their roots, making genealogy the second most popular hobby in the country (after gardening). Enthusiasts clamor for new information from dozens of subscription-based websites, email newsletters, and magazines devoted to the subject. For these eager roots-seekers looking to take their searches to the next level, DNA testing is the answer.

After a brief introduction to genealogy and genetics fundamentals, the authors explain the types of available testing, what kind of information the tests can provide, how to interpret the results, and how the tests work (it doesn't involve digging up your dead relatives). It's inexpensive, easy to do, and the results are accurate: It's as simple as swabbing the inside of your cheek and popping a sample in the mail.

Family lore has it that a branch of our family emigrated to Argentina and now I've found some people there with our name. Can testing tell us whether we're from the same family?

My mother was adopted and doesn't know her ethnicity. Are there any tests available to help her learn about her heritage? I just discovered someone else with my highly unusual surname. How can we find out if we have a common ancestor? These are just a few of the types of genealogical scenarios readers can pursue. The authors reveal exactly what is possible-and what is not possible-with genetic testing. They include case studies of both famous historical mysteries and examples of ordinary folks whose exploration of genetic genealogy has enabled them to trace their roots.

Trace Your Roots with DNA: Using Genetic Tests to Explore Your Family Tree Details

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Brad Garton says

I liked the book. It is a good breakdown of what DNA testing can contribute to genealogy. It focuses on the basics of Y-String and mtDNA testing. It does get a little technical in places. It's a good basic introduction to the technology.

Having said that, the book is now pretty dated. A LOT has happened in the last 14 years. Some bad some good. A lot more tests are available, and the books only briefly mentions autosomal testing. Privacy laws have also had a huge impact on a lot of the available sites so much of the references don't work anymore. If you want a good technical background for Genetic testing for Genealogy, this book will work. If you want an overview of state of the art right now, and good working references. Probably another book would be a better choice.

Meg says

This is another essential that I'll probably get my own copy of, though I'm disappointed it hasn't been updated. Surely something has changed in the past ten years?

A really thorough explanation of DNA and genealogy, various problems it can help sort out, and how to run projects. Can't wait to get some swabs!

Donald says

An interesting look at the increasing use of DNA testing to aid genealogical study. The technical aspects of the tests and sundry things are explained well and the book is an easy read for those not familiar with either DNA/DNA testing or genealogy.

Lesley says

To say I read this book would be generous, I will say that I read most of the parts that I thought would offer me some insight. This book was borrowed from my local library system on the premise that it would shed some light on what I should be expecting results wise from a DNA genealogy test that I recently submitted. The idea is that while it wouldn't tell me what my results are to be, it was more to do some research about what these results can tell us.

This book, I feel, is a must for anyone who has or is considering using DNA to further help complete ones genealogical tree. It explains everything (even some quite complex ideas) to where the majority of people can understand. From the minor and most simple details to the most complex ideas.

I will re-borrow this book (maybe even purchase it in the future) after my results come in and see whether this book can help me make sense of the results.

Beth says

This book is unfortunately outdated; it discusses primarily Y-DNA and mt-DNA. Not autosomal DNA, which is the most popular form of testing now. Some of the information is still useful, though; e.g., a section on how to persuade people in your family to test, a section on running a surname project, etc.

A says

Definitely a must read for anybody looking to research genealogy with DNA testing. It gives realistic expectations for what to expect while remaining optimistic for the future. The author gives great advice for people of different circumstances, and allows the reader to decide which advice relates to them and whether a certain test would be useful for their research. I am very happy I received this book.

Diane says

My head still hurts from trying to digest the information.

I'm buying a copy.

J. Ewbank says

If you have ever wondered if someone who looks like you or has your same last name or last name that is spelled a little differently from you, you can now find out. No needles but a simple test, genetic test, will allow you to find out.

This book tells you about all you need to know about DNA testing and if you are tested it will help tell you which region your African ancestors came from.

Wow, interesting reading.

J. Robert Ewbank author "John Wesley, Natural Man, and the 'Isms'"

J says

Most of this book is extremely out of date. It's actually pretty funny to read her claim that DNA collected for genealogy will never be useful for criminal investigations. Two parts of the book are still worth reading. The basic science, i.e., Chapter 2: Genetic Essentials, and Part 3 about running a (usually) surname project. The book was written before testing autosomal DNA became common; this is now the most common type. You'd be better off reading a more recent book.

Allison says

This is a great book for anyone just starting to research genetic genealogy. It explains the reasons behind mtDNA and yDNA testing and has a great glossary that's always useful. However, since it was published nearly 10 years ago, a lot has changed in the genetic genealogy world, including a whole new type of testing available. I hope the authors intend to do a second edition to include things like autosomal DNA testing because I think their writing is very accessible

L.A.B. says

I do a bit of family history research and have an ancestor who is most difficult to track down. One of my cousins provided a DNA sample in hopes it would provide a breakthrough. So far it has not and I wondered if that was because I didn't understand enough about the test to make the best use of the results. Hence, I picked up Trace Your Roots with DNA by Smolenyak and Turner, two well-known genealogists (Rodale, 2004).

The book is a good introduction to what tests are available and how the results might be used in genealogy, and it is written in a manner that makes it easy to read and understand. If you are contemplating DNA to further your family history connections, this would be a good way to get an overview. But I was disappointed because it did not provide me with the detail I wanted about interpreting the results. I'll find another book that gives me that depth.

Richard says

If you are at all interested in DNA or genealogy, this is the book to get started with. Unfortunately, it was copyrighted in 2004, so the information might be pretty out of date, but it is a good place to begin.

The authors have tried very hard to keep it as simple as possible, but as with any science you have to get a little complicated.

Diana says

This was a well written older book (2004) on the topic of using DNA to explore your family tree. First, I have a confession to make, every time I read about DNA and genetic testing for genealogical purposes, my eyes glaze over, I feel a little faint and nothing sinks in. When I saw this book at our local library, I thought that maybe I could begin to understand genetic testing from a more historical perspective. I was actually able to get through quite a bit before my eyes glazed, I felt faint and couldn't remember what I was reading. So, although it is really out of date (that is why I gave it three stars), I picked up a few nuggets that will help me the next time I attempt to study genetic testing. I do wish that the authors would update this book because the writing style was very good and a difficult subject (at least for me) was well presented....

Wendell Bowen says

Did not give me the understanding I was looking for.

Mhd says

Great! I appreciate that it gets fairly technical without being impossible. I really appreciate the emphasis on not just testing, but the need to get other tested and comparing pedigrees. I really, really wish that they'd do a new edition. I intend to buy this book...I will refer to this more than I can with just library access.
