

Our speaker this month was Helen Shimek, leader of the DNA Special Interest Group of the Erie Society for Genealogical Research. She presented "Comparing Tools from DNA Testing Sites". This presentation discussed the value of uploading DNA data to more than one site, and demonstrated a variety of tools offered by some of the sites. Here are some notes from the presentation, which focused on cousin matching to discover common (perhaps new to you) ancestors:

To maximize chances of identifying a match, it's best to get more than one person in your family to test, especially a parent or a sibling. You can also expand your search for cousin matches by testing at multiple companies.

Two companies require you to test with them (Ancestry and 23andMe), but three others let you download your DNA results from another company. Those are MyHeritage (best site if you're pursuing continental European matches), FamilyTreeDNA, and LivingDNA (best if you're searching for matches in the British Isles).

If you're only going to test at one company, Ancestry is the best choice since they have the largest number of tests completed and where more testers have a family tree. yDNA tests (to research the strictly male line) and mtDNA (for researching the strictly female line) are specialized tests and only available at FamilyTreeDNA.

Helen spent a lot of time talking about using clustering matches and the tools available to do that. Each testing site has tools to do that. There are also standalone systems, the purely manual Leeds Method (<https://www.danaleeds.com/would-you-rather-use-a-worksheet-the-leeds-method/>) and Genetic Affairs (<https://geneticaffairs.com/>). GEDmatch (<https://www.gedmatch.com/>) and DNA Painter (<https://www.dnainter.com/>) have popular sets of tools (basic ones free) to help organize your search.

Helen used the term centimorgan in her talk and it's all over the testing sites and the results you get. The more centimorgans a match is to you, the closer it is to you genetically, so their family relationship is closer too. Here's an article with one description, and a nice chart of the typical range of centimorgans for relatives in your family tree.

<https://www.familysearch.org/en/blog/centimorgan-chart-understanding-dna>

Helen also put together a handout with lots of good links for you to learn more about DNA testing. It's an attachment to these notes.