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GEDmatch collaborates with genomics firm Verogen

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US based GEDmatch, a pioneer in consumer genealogy has joined with forensic genomics firm Verogen, Inc. in a move that allows the company to ensure ongoing privacy protections and enhance the customer experience for users of its website.

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“I am confident that we have found an ideal partner for GEDmatch,” said founder Curtis Rogers. “Verogen understands our philosophy and shares the vision of GEDmatch, which has always been about using science to connect people,” Rogers said. “Verogen is able to support our growth while staying true to our roots.”

GEDmatch allows users to upload genetic profiles created by other genealogy sites in order to expand the search for familial links. GEDmatch’s database currently has more than 1.3 million customer profiles and is gaining as many as 1,000 new users every day.

In the coming months, GEDmatch users will begin to see improvements to the website, such as an enhanced homepage that offers increased functionality, Verogen CEO Brett Williams said. Verogen will also bolster the GEDmatch platform, resulting in increased stability and optimal searchability. These back-end changes won’t disrupt the experience for users and, in fact, will make searching the database easier, Williams said.

GEDmatch’s terms of service will not change with respect to the use, purposes of processing, and disclosures of user data, Williams confirmed. The website gives users a choice to opt-in to allow law enforcement to search uploaded files as a tool to solve violent crimes. Among the successes of this technology is work by public safety officials who used GEDmatch to apprehend accused Golden State Killer Joseph DeAngelo, a notorious serial killer who terrorized California and evaded police for decades until his arrest in 2018.

As many as 70 violent crimes have been solved as a result of genealogy searches. “Never before have we as a society had the opportunity to serve as a molecular eyewitness, enabling law enforcement to solve violent crimes efficiently and with certainty,” Williams said.

“Still, our users have the absolute right to choose whether they want to share their information with law enforcement by opting in,” Williams said. “We are steadfast in our commitment to protecting users’ privacy and will fight any future attempts to access data of those who have not opted in.”

Added Rogers: “Our number one priority is our customers. We are and always have been a genealogy site whose goal is to help people find answers they’re looking for about themselves and their families. As we grow, we want to enhance the customer experience by making the site more user-friendly and by ensuring data is protected. Verogen can help us do that.”

Under terms of the deal, Rogers will retain a key role focused on the primary mission of GEDmatch, which is providing tools to help amateur and professional researchers and genealogists.