

President's Report

The High Holy Days have been and gone and a new Jewish year has begun. May I start by wishing you all a happy, peaceful and healthy year ahead.

In genealogy, the future is looking rosy for Polish research, with the new agreement between the Polish State Archives (PSA) and JRI-Poland to open up all records in the PSA. Research of Jewish records in many of our former homelands is becoming easier, with Latvian and now Czech registers being digitised and made available. Unfortunately the same cannot be said about Jewish records in Egypt.

A number of Australians attended the IAJGS Conference in Boston, including three from Sydney, who declared the conference eminently enjoyable. Two of them, Rieke Nash and Evelyn Frybort, were involved in setting up a new Special Interest Group for the Kolo-Rypin-Plock area (KRPArea Research Group or KRPARG). This SIG covers an area of Poland which was under the control of Russia and close to the border of Prussia during the Partition of Poland. On her return, Rieke favoured us with a presentation on the latest news from the Polish State Archives and JRI-Poland.

It is pleasing to see a gradual change of attitude among Poles towards the Jews who were part of their country's history for centuries. One town in the KRP area, Radziejów, is holding an "In Memoriam" in October to honour the Jews who had lived in the town and commemorate those who perished in the Holocaust. It will be no small occasion, with the screening of a film, a photo exhibition, a lecture, a discussion and the unveiling of a plaque.

Closer to home, we had a successful Eastern Suburbs workshop in Waverley Library in July and look forward to using the Library as the venue for future workshops. In addition, the reference books we donated to the library will allow people to conduct their own research in their own time.

Meantime our members continue to travel. Peter Keeda has set off for Poland and Dianne Johnstone has returned from Lithuania and is preparing an illustrated talk for Sunday 1st December.

We extend a warm welcome to new members Hilary May Black, Margot and Jane Flack and Deborah Goodin.

**Jeannette Tsoulos
President**

5 October to 3 November 2013

**International Jewish Genealogy Month which honours our Jewish
ancestors through the pursuit of Jewish family history research**

Now is the time to get more involved in your society ...

Boston 2013 – what a week it was!

A conference report

Robyn Dryen



Imagine 1200 over-excited genealogists greeting old friends and new as they queue to check-in to the grand old Boston Park Plaza Hotel, or to collect their conference registrations, or simply to wait for the over-crowded lifts. This was the scene on Sunday, 4 August 2013, when most of us first gathered at the 33rd conference of the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS).

If we thought the program and talk outlines were overwhelming, the conference syllabus with more detailed hand-outs made choice of program even more difficult.

I think the conference organisers had in mind a gentle easing-in, with the Share Fair on the Sunday afternoon. Instead, it was the beginning of a crescendo as participants searched for their relevant SIGs, browsed books and photographs from vendors and others, or began their adventures with *My Heritage* or *Family Tree DNA*.

The Conference officially launched with an impassioned talk by Aaron Lansky of the Yiddish Book Center. From Monday to Thursday, the program was packed with choices – talks, panels, hands-on computer workshops, walking tours, films, breakfasts and lunches with guest speakers, evening entertainment, and just plain schmoozing. I don't think

there was one minute when you didn't have to make a choice between activities. Meals were grabbed simply to re-fuel – no lingering longer, or sitting to contemplate. It was full-on from dawn till late.

FACT: While 54% of conference participants said they have been doing research for 10 years or more, 42% of participants were attending their first IAJGS conference!

Technology at the Conference

This year there were major breakthroughs in the use of technology to make the conference more accessible to both on-site participants and those further afield.

The conference app

Developed by *Core-apps* with input from the conference organisers, this smart phone and portable devices application was a fantastic organising aide. It integrated a daily planner which could be personally customised; the full conference schedule with the outlines of the talks and speaker details – all linked to an automatic news update, twitter feed and Facebook page. If you attended a session, there was a space to record notes, and the facility to provide feedback for the use of the presenter and future conference organisers.

Twitter and Facebook

I think that we were all too busy attending sessions or making new connections, so the Facebook links was not greatly used. Twitter seemed somewhat more popular, though I'm not sure how many new fans it attracted. Nonetheless they were interesting first-time applications for an IAJGS conference, and likely to be more used in the future.

Live Streaming

IAJGS Conference LIVE! was produced by the IAJGS and FamilySearch, thanks to the generosity of Harvey Krueger. Via *LIVE!* streaming, anyone in any location with the desire to learn more about Jewish family history was able to attend the event via the Internet.

LIVE! broadcast 50 sessions over five days from the Boston venue. *LIVE!* participants were able to view the sessions in real time via an Internet connection to a computer or tablet or smart phone. These sessions will be available by subscription for playback for three months following the conference. Handouts, where provided by the speaker, will also be available via download.

LIVE! participants were able to ask questions of the speakers and panellists via Twitter.

Audio recordings

As well as those sessions which were video-recorded and broadcast during the conference, many sessions were audio-recorded. From the recordings I have heard, the sound quality is generally better than in previous years.

Copies of individual session recordings can be purchased for \$US11 at <http://audio.iajgs2013.org>. The website includes detailed instructions for creating an account and downloading the audio files.

Australian participation

There was a large contingent of Australians in Boston. Rieke Nash and Evelyn Frybort eagerly assisted in launching the Kolo-Rypin-Plock Area Research Group (KRPARG) and ensured the success of their table at the Sunday Share Fair. Susie Eisfelder and Esther Kahn (both from Melbourne) were volunteers who assisted presenters, and I gave a talk on researching Australian family connections (past and present).

Also attending were Naomi Bloch, Jennie Buch, Rodney Eisfelder, Sara Elkas, Eli Rabinowitz, Myra Waddell and Judy Wilkenfeld.



Some of the Australians in Boston

Photo courtesy of Eli Rabinowitz

IAJGS Awards 2013



Neville Lamdan Photo: Jan Meisels Allen

Lifetime Achievement Award: Neville Lamdan

Neville Lamdan was honoured for his pioneering work in establishing the International Institute for Jewish Genealogy (IIJG) and the Paul Jacobi Center in Jerusalem. As director of IIJG from 2006 to 2012, he worked to gain recognition of Jewish genealogy as an academic discipline.



Barbara Ellman and Susana Leistner Bloch

Photo: Jan Meisels Allen

Outstanding Contribution to Jewish Genealogy via the Internet, Print or Electronic Product: JewishGen KehilaLinks

KehilaLinks has encouraged and assisted the creation of over 600 web pages commemorating the places where Jews have lived. KehilaLinks pages also serve as a networking base for people interested in these ancestral communities. KehilaLinks continues to grow, thanks to the tireless efforts of coordinators Susana Leistner Bloch and Barbara Ellman, a team of volunteer webpage designers, and its many site owners

Outstanding Publication by an IAJGS Member Association: Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, for *Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories*

Tracing Our Roots, Telling Our Stories was published by the JGS of Toronto in celebration of its 25th anniversary. It shares family stories, first-person narratives and accounts of research and discovery written by 44 of the Society's members.



Les Kelman

Photo: Jan Meisels Allen



Brooke Schreier Ganz, Pamela Weisberger, Jay Osborn

Photo: Jan Meisels Allen

Outstanding Program or Project Award: Gesher Galicia, for its Cadastral Map & Landowner Records Project and the Gesher Galicia Map Room

The Gesher Galicia Cadastral Map and Landowner Records Project has provided ground-breaking content for genealogical researchers. Through the funding of Gesher Galicia and individual contributors, 19th century Austrian land maps and landowner records are copied at archives in Eastern Europe. Indexed data are made available to researchers in the free online All Galicia Database. In many cases, these maps and records provide the only available documentary evidence of a family's life in a town

The Rabbi Malcolm Stern Grant

❖ The Oded Yarkoni Historical Archives of Petah Tikva

\$3,000 was awarded for recording the oral history of the settlement, Petah Tikva. Descendants of the settlement's founders, its first industrialists, teachers and adults who learned in the first schools in Petah Tikva will be interviewed. The material will be made available to genealogists, family historians and the public via the archives.

❖ Gesher Galicia Website and All Galicia Database

In 2012 IAJGS received \$15,000 from the estate of Jon Stedman to honour his late father, John Stedman. The IAJGS Board decided to award \$3,000 in each of the next five years in the memory of John Stedman under the Stern Award. The first of these John Stedman Memorial Grants went to the Gesher Galicia Website and All Galicia Database. The funds will go toward making Gesher Galicia a multilingual site, enabling more international users to easily research their Galician roots.

The IAJGS Board for 2013-4

President	Marlis Humphrey	Melbourne Beach, FL, USA
Vice President	Jan Meisels Allen	Agoura Hills, CA, USA
Secretary	Mark Nicholls	London, England
Treasurer	Paul Silverstone	New York City, NY, USA

Immediate Past President

Michael Goldstein Jerusalem, Israel

Elected Directors

Nolan Altman	Oceanside, NY, USA
Daniel Horowitz	Kfar Saba, Israel
Kahlile Mehr	Bountiful, UT, USA
Jay Sage	Newton Center, MA, USA
Jackye Sullins	Los Angeles, CA, USA
One position Vacant	

Joel Spector who was Secretary becomes the appointed archivist.

Future International Conferences

The IAJGS Board has decided that all future international conferences will be either directly hosted by IAJGS, or hosted by IAJGS in partnership with a locally-based Jewish Genealogy Society. The locations of forth-coming conferences are:

- ❖ 2014 – Salt Lake City, USA July 27-August 1—hosted by IAJGS and the JGS of Utah
- ❖ 2015 – Jerusalem, Israel July 6-10, hosted by IAJGS.
- ❖ 2016 – Seattle, USA August 7-12, hosted by the IAJGS
- ❖ 2017 or 2018 – in Eastern Europe

The Latest on Researching Polish Records

Rieke Nash

Sometimes I wonder about the billions of pieces of paper sitting in Archives around the world, all waiting to be found. Fortunately for researchers with an interest in Poland, some of these pieces of paper are becoming accessible online.

Earlier this year Jewish Records Indexing-Poland (JRI-Poland) announced the new historic agreement signed with the Polish State Archives (PSA), whereby JRI-Poland will resume the indexing of Jewish records held by the Archives. At the Boston Conference in August, JRI-Poland celebrated 18 years of operation which have resulted in over 5 million birth, marriage, death and other records, being added to their database, covering over 550 towns in present-day Poland.

The source for some of these records had been the microfilms filmed by the LDS in the 1970s. Over the years, volunteers have been indexing these readily available records and adding them to the JRI-Poland database. The indexing of the less accessible records in the PSA, many of which were in Russian, was gradually funded by researchers with an interest in particular towns and has resulted in a valuable database that identifies family records. Once identified, requests for copies of these documents could be made to the PSA.

National Digital Archives (NDA) website

This year the PSA has announced and begun the huge task of digitising all the vital records in their Regional Archives and making them freely available online.

This is not just an image of an index page but is a copy of the actual document. Even so, without the year of an actual event, finding family can be a daunting task. By consulting the JRI-Poland database, the details of the year and record number will help to find the appropriate record. Further, the latest aim of the project is to link each of the records on the JRI-Poland database with its digital image on the PSA website.

Some linkages have already been made e.g. AGAD records have a “View Image” button where it will retrieve the actual document in the search results. Whereas a few other Archives have already posted images which have not been linked to their JRI-Poland entry, there is a notice on the header of the Search page which says “HERE”. This leads to the page where there are lists of the digital holdings for this Archive. From there it is possible to access some of the records and enlarge and print a copy of a relevant record.

These are the early days of an amazing opportunity to document our Jewish ancestry in Poland. This will require, again, the dedication of JRI-Poland volunteers who have already achieved so much in making vital information available to so many.

Some Beginner Hints

At the Boston Conference, JRI-Poland Moderator Judy Baston gave the following hints for beginning Polish research. To discover what records are available for your town, she suggested starting with the following resources:

- * Miriam Weiner's Routes to Roots Archival database: <http://www.rtrfoundation.org>
- * Polish State Archives: <http://www.archiwa.gov.pl>
- * Polish State Archives Vital Records Database (PRADZIAD): <http://baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/pradziad.php?l=en>
- * Polish State Archives Population Register (ELA): <http://baza.archiwa.gov.pl/sezam/ela.php?l=en>
- * LDS Family History Library Catalogue: <http://www.familysearch.org/catalog-search>
- * JRI-Poland *Your Town* Page: <http://www.jri-poland.org>

Speaker handouts from the Conference are available in our Library and will also be available soon in the Waverley Library.

Kolo-Rypin-Plock Area Research Group

Evelyn Frybort

Two of our Society's members, Rieke Nash and Evelyn Frybort, have recently joined Ken Drabinsky from Calgary, Canada, in setting up a new research group – KRPARG. KRPARG made its first public appearance at the Boston conference Share Fair, attracting much interest from participants with roots in this area.

The region covered by KRPARG includes 31 towns within the geographical area of Poland. Its boundaries are Kolo in the south, Plock in the East, and Rypin to the north.

Some of the objectives of this group are:

- * to assist researchers with ancestors from this area;
- * to link researchers to websites relevant to their search;
- * to assist group members in communicating with other families with ancestors from these towns;
- * to encourage an understanding of the family linkages between towns in the area and the historical/social/political and economic factors leading to movement between the towns; and
- * to list all family names associated with specific towns.

If you have ancestors who lived in any towns within this area and would like to know more about our group, or to become a member, please contact:

- * Rieke Nash genealogy@rpnash.com
- * Evelyn Frybort efrybort@optusnet.com.au
- * Ken Drabinsky kenjdgen@gmail.com
- * Website <http://www.krparg.org>

A Personal Journey

Esther Kahn – a *first-timer* at the IAJGS Conference, Boston, August 4-9 2013

It was my very first time at an IAJGS conference in Boston, in early August. As with many, plans were made in advance for hotel, travel and activities. In my case, the trip was built around further travel to New York, Washington DC and finally London, from which I have just returned.

The Aussie contingent came from many states, and not all of us even knew each other, or for that matter had ever met before. It was quite a lot of fun to go up to someone from your own country and find out more about them and their particular quest and journey through the 'World of Genealogy'.

A few of us did bemoan the lack of our own regular National Conference, which is something to think about seriously for the future. Realistically, we all come from the same backgrounds as those from countries which have larger memberships of Jewish societies. We have our own experts in various fields and people who can contribute much to the knowledge and expertise of Jewish Genealogy in general – just some food for thought – you have to start somewhere!

I must say that the conference hotel, The Boston Park Plaza was a good choice as it had all the facilities needed, and they catered well for us. The Public Gardens nearby were lovely with their Swan Boats.

I took a tour to Cape Cod on Saturday 3rd August, and when I returned later that day, the foyer was abuzz with so many delegates! I hurriedly ran up to my room, got my badge out, put it on and literally charged downstairs to join the buzz, immediately feeling the hype and energy downstairs. This was, as the Americans would say, *The Real McCoy*. It was to set the scene of the next few days as I made yet another journey in my genealogical endeavours.

Soon, I too, was going around speaking loudly and excitedly, like at any Jewish function, and with my head at an angle of 45 degrees in order to read the names of delegates, their country and family names being researched! It took some tutoring by experienced delegates to tie the badge a certain way so names could be read easily and without too much stooping.

As time went on, many had coloured ribbons added to their badges and that made it more fun to meet new people who were interested in what the ribbons indicated. Competition, yet congeniality surrounded the number of ribbons attached to individual badges, and who had more added to the general interest and made introducing yourself easier. However, my badge and ribbons were not the biggest I found!

The Aussies were seen to be a little *different*, as we came from so far away. You could hear it in the voices, “Australia!” – they would exclaim in a surprised way, “How long did you travel to come to Boston?”

I met many Americans who had been to so many conferences, and some who had been to all 32 of the previous IAJGSs! It seems to have become a familiar past-time, perhaps even an annual addiction for many, and you can see why. It certainly was infectious!

I decided to volunteer, and facilitated a session for Robyn Dryen, one of ‘ours’. I must admit it was a bit funny not to have actually known one of your fellow members! This was the first time we had met. I also facilitated for Jeanette Rosenberg of JCR-UK/JGSGB, of which I am a member. We have known each other for a while now.

In both sessions, I picked up some extra pointers. It just goes to show that you do not know it all! New information and records are always becoming available and more accessible, thanks to digitisation projects. We also need to have an open mind to see how new information and sources can help to enhance our own research.

I also facilitated the Bessarabia SIG- Computer session presented by Yefim Kogan. Most participants were American and it was fun listening and using the computers. I learnt a bit more about how to get the best use of JewishGen search engines. Funny how sometimes we just need to know some simple tips in order to be able to get more from available records to assist our research. It was interesting that many had experienced the same sort of stumbling blocks and proverbial brick walls that I had.

I assisted Mark Nicholls of JCR-UK for the Todd Knowles presentation, which again had good visual examples and new insights on available information on familysearch.org/. Todd recognised me as we had met at an Australasian conference in Adelaide last year.

I went to many other interesting presentations. Again, the message was that new projects in archives were enabling many unseen and unknown documents to become available. Some are digitised, whilst others are not. However, archives are now opening up so much more to us.

In particular, a presentation by Natalie Dunai and Pamela Weisberger, *Polish Magnate Landowners – Bringing “The Lords’ Jews” to Life*, gave insights and associated stories about the Landowners and their relationship with Jewish residents and tenants.

If you are interested in this topic, it is a good idea to have a look at the additional information contained in the Syllabus handout for this session (see New Resources p.11) This session told of the history of Jewish life in towns and *shtetls* and the interrelationships existing between many of the Polish nobility and the Jewish population, some of whom were also large landowners.

Some online references were given as well as sources to search for towns and related information. One famous connection mentioned was the Radziwill records, the family later connected to Jackie Kennedy through the marriage of her sister, Lee, to Count Radziwill. I found this quite an eye-opener; it did set up questions in my mind about the likely origins of the family name given information I already had from records.

Mention was also made that a possible missing link might be available to assist us in tracking and linking up information. In earlier documents the name often seems to be shown as being *vel* – meaning *formerly or also known as*.

The presenter also cited taxation and other census lists which existed with only patronymic names, and the fact that family groupings and repeated names were methods of identifying families at that time. Many of us use these tricks to infer from listings available to us. This is how we find second marriages which can then be further traced to give the numerous branches to our family trees.

There were so many other sessions I went to that this report would never end if I listed them.

Now for me and I suspect for many of you, it is consolidation, digestion and action time.

It is timely to go back, review your notes and the material presented, and to remember that each of our families has a unique story. We need presentations like these to remind us that there were many reasons our families came to Australia, and indeed went to any other country.

Some of the information presented might have perhaps challenged existing family lore and stories. Remember that things can get lost in translation, over time and through generations ... and Jewish people being Jewish, all talk at once, anyway!!

I found that those who had gone to the presentation about migration from the Pale of Settlement, (Hal Bookbinder: *Why Did our Ancestors Leave a Nice Place Like the Pale?*) were bubbling over with the new knowledge that perhaps not everyone changed names in order to escape conscription! There were actually opportunities for Jews to leave for a better life.

I know that branches of my tree went to Scandinavian countries from Lithuania. Not all those shown as ‘missing’ necessarily absconded. Think about it: new information and perspectives might shed new light on family mysteries.

Remember that we need to use new resources and information as tools to further our research and pass this on to the future generations. We may not all be able to break down ‘brick walls’, but we can now use what we have learned to try to put the pieces in a better order for future generations.

How fortunate we are to have had the dedication of so many SIG leaders who have contributed so much and worked with so many archives and governments.

I did say to Robyn and Jeanette in between friendly banter, that what they presented was just common sense. We need to be reminded to ‘use your noodle’, ‘use it, don’t lose it’, and to take time to learn about new sources of information.

Now is the time to review what we were given at the conference and also to review our own research.

And, Aussies, it is time to use the expertise of many people here and perhaps take the bold step of arranging our own regular national conferences so that one day in the future we could host an IAIGS event here, Downunder.

What a wonderful experience for me this was. We must be truly grateful to the IAJGS for their management and co-hosting of Boston 2013.

Thanks to all for your friendship during the conference. It was lovely to finally be able to put a face to a name, albeit by standing in front with a stooped demeanour in order to read the badges!

With my thanks and best wishes to you all.

New resources in our library

Rieke Nash

33rd IAJGS International Conference in Boston, August 2013

www.iajgs2013.org

The Syllabus (in hard-copy and on a flash drive) is available in our Library. Of interest to most members is the Conference Family Finder. Handouts from most of the lectures are included in the Syllabus and the Society has bought the Audio files of most of the presentations.

For the first time, some of the lectures were videoed and can be accessed at the Conference website for a fee at www.iajgs2013.org/live.cfm#info. While this *LIVE!* service was available in real time, the talks will also be accessible for three months after the conference.

The Keynote Speaker at the conference was Aaron Lansky, the founder of the Yiddish Book Centre, a few hours drive from Boston. His story of the rescuing, translating and disseminating of Yiddish books, the cultural heritage of much of Eastern European Jewry, is a unique and moving tale. His book, *Outwitting History* (2004), is available for borrowing from the North Shore Synagogue Library.

Greenock's Jewish Community 1880-1940 by Viki McDonnell (2012).

Greenock is a small town 25 miles West of Glasgow, Scotland, where many Eastern European Jews settled before migrating to other parts of the globe.

Viki has collected backgrounds and stories for over 30 Greenock families. As well as documentation for Births, Marriages and Deaths from the Scottish Archives, she has included information from other sources such as *The Jewish Chronicle*. Copies of the book can be obtained from Viki at viki@vmcdonnell.freeserve.co.uk

Maitland Jewish Cemetery: A Monument to Dreams and Deeds by Janis Wilton (2010)

Maitland Regional Art Gallery.

This beautifully illustrated and researched publication documents the Jewish community of Maitland, New South Wales, once a thriving Jewish centre from the 1830s. Inspired from the project to commemorate the pioneer cemetery, the book is a collection of historic documents, photos and stories from this community as well as details of those who were buried there.

News and Interesting websites – held over to next issue

Dates for your diary

AJGS workshops and meetings

Sunday October 6*	9:30am-12:30pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield
Monday October 21	10:00am-1:00pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield
Sunday November 3	9:30am-12:30pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield
Monday November 18	10:00am-1:00pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield
Sunday November 24	2:00pm-5:00pm	Workshop – Waverley Library, Bondi Junction
Sunday December 1**	9:30am-12:30pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield
Monday December 16	10:00am-1:00pm	Workshop – Rev Katz Library, Lindfield

* During the workshop, Eli Rabinowitz will use his visit to Belarus last year to illustrate why JewishGen Kehilalinks, blogs, social networks and other online sources are so relevant in Jewish genealogy today. He will describe them, show how they work and introduce the audience to useful strategies, commencing at 10 am.

** During the workshop, Dianne Johnstone will be giving an illustrated talk on her tour of Jewish Lithuania, commencing at 10 am.

The Last Word

This issue is brought to you despite the obvious distractions and attractions of a desk in the sky, atop our Manhattan skyscraper.

I apologise for the extended break between issues but hope that the reports of the IAJGS conference inspire you to consider participating in future conferences.

If you are lacking in chutzpah and don't want to offer yourself as a speaker, think about volunteering your services to introduce speakers, help out with the AV technology, or generally assist with day-to-day conference administration. It is a great way to make new friends and feel part of the proceedings.

You can't ever substitute for the delight in meeting new people who share your passion for genealogy, or making connections with people researching your town and/or family names. However, if you can't make it to Salt Lake next year, or Jerusalem in 2015, do consider tuning in to Conference LIVE!



Robyn Dryen
Editor
Email: ed@ajgs.org.au