

KOSHER KOALA

Newsletter of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society Inc.

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Cover: *One (Aubergine)* by Nikki Green.

Nikki is an artist and educator now living in Denmark, Western Australia. She grew up in Sydney, where she received a Jewish education and where her knowledge of the Hebrew language was grounded. Nikki attained a Diploma in Interior Design and Bachelor of Fine Art, majoring in print-making, and a Diploma of Secondary Education. She draws on her heritage and the landscape around her to create public and private commissions, hand-crafted marriage certificates, and artworks celebrating the cycle of life.
nikkigreen.com.au

2016 IAJGS Conference – Seattle

Robyn Dryen

The 36th IAJGS International Conference on Jewish Genealogy was held in Seattle, 7-12th August. The opening Sunday was not the usual leisurely build-up – it was full-on programming from 8 am! There was an Educators' Forum for those who teach and for those who introduce young people to genealogy. There were also a number of introductory sessions for first-time conference attendees. These were well-attended and there was an immediate buzz around the conference floor.



Photo: Robyn Dryen with Max Wald at the Share Fair
Photo: Liz James

Sunday afternoon was the traditional Share Fair, with tables for Special Interest Groups, Birds of a Feather (BOF) groups and JGSs. Evelyn Frybort and I joined with our Victorian colleagues, Liz James and Max and Peppy Wald, to have a combined Australian JGS table.

There was considerable interest in Australia, as many conference attendees had relatives who had lived for a time in Australia, or had children who had married Australians. We had a steady stream of visitors to the table. Throughout the conference, people sought out 'the Australians' to ask for advice on finding information about their relatives. Our AJGS bookmarks were quite a hit – genealogists still read books!

The opening night keynote address, *Sephardic Family History as Jewish Family History*, was one of the conference highlights. The speaker, Dr. Devin E. Naar, is the Isaac Alhadeff Professor in Sephardic Studies and Assistant Professor of History, at the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies, University of Washington. He told a riveting tale of his quest to find the links between two Naar families living in the US – one with known origins in the Caribbean, the other (his own) with known origins in Salonica. And so we learnt of a Ladino expression that means *relative of my heel*— someone who might be a relative, or an in-law's relative, or might not be a relative at all, but a very close friend of the family. His search extended across the world, included teaching himself to transcribe Ladino – but he ultimately failed to connect the two families. DNA is the next avenue to explore.

This was an erudite and entertaining start to the conference.

The week-long program was packed with interesting talks, focussed particularly on Sephardic genealogy as this is the predominant origin of Seattle's Jewish population. There was a wonderful foyer poster exhibition of the history of many early Jewish immigrants to the Seattle area. As well, there was more than usual attention given to the outreaches of the diaspora – a talk about a Jewish family in Cuba, two talks about Jews in China, and a talk which followed up on the search for Jews who escaped the Holocaust via Japan (see *Kosher Koala*, January 2016).

With so many sessions on offer, and a full-scale film program running in parallel, the conference never felt crowded – though a few sessions could have benefitted from larger venues. The organising team worked tirelessly to make our experience trouble-free. With few exceptions, the technology worked, although the wi-fi speeds diminished notably between Saturday morning (before most people arrived) and Saturday evening, when everybody attempted to download their emails and conference syllabus!

The pre-ordered kosher food boxes were ready and waiting each lunch-time, and the paid lunches and functions were catered with minimum fuss. All of this made it a very easy conference to attend.

My shock at being scheduled to speak at 7.30am was matched by my astonishment at the solidarity of the Australian contingent who all turned out to hear me. I was truly touched by this support and a little alarmed at being *the expert* in the company of so many experts.

I attended the BOF meeting for newsletter editors. We were an interesting mix of experience and lack thereof. Some had been editing their society newsletter for 10 years or more, one was yet to edit her first! The common lament was the lack of contributions from members.

Not every society has the wherewithal to subscribe to every newsletter, and not all newsletters are made available without subscription. To make articles more accessible, we agreed to contribute to a common index of articles from our newsletters and journals. The index will either link directly to the article where this is online without charge, or will link to an email contact to request a copy of the article and instructions for any payment.

I will be seeking volunteers to assist in the indexing task. It will not be onerous, as it is only for articles – we will not be indexing the myriad of news items, new websites and events. Janice Sellers, editor of *ZichronNote*, the journal of the San Francisco Bay area, will prepare a template and co-ordinate the compilation of the master list.

The IAJGS AGM was largely uneventful. The process for nominating and preferring candidates for the Board of Directors was debated and will result in a changed process. This occurred because two directors, whose term had expired, but who had expressed a willingness to continue to serve, were not on the selection committee's recommended 'slate' for election. Both nominated from the floor – a somewhat messy procedure – and one was ultimately elected to serve. Streamlining the process and increasing transparency are at the core of the recommended changes.

There was also some discussion of the financial position following last year's Jerusalem Conference. Explanations for the first financial loss for an annual conference had been missing from the annual IAJGS Financial Report. The information provided was that there were unforeseen expenditures due to

- security concerns in the weeks leading up to the conference;
- the previous decision not to provide food outlets at the conference venue; this necessitated last-minute hiring of shuttle services at lunch-times; and
- as yet unresolved issues with the contractors responsible for conference logistics.

In short, it was a thoroughly enjoyable and successful conference. The 2017 conference will be held in Orlando, Florida. As widely expected, the 2018 conference will be held in Warsaw – exact dates to be determined. Start planning now – this should be an event to remember.

Awards

Numerous awards were given by IAJGS at the banquet on the final evening. The major ones included:

- ✳ Lifetime Achievement Award: Ron Doctor
- ✳ Outstanding Project: Lance Ackerfeld for the JewishGen Yizkor Book Project
- ✳ Outstanding Publication: Jewish Genealogical Society of Long Island for the *Photographic History of Long Island*
- ✳ Volunteer of the Year Award: Marelynn Zipser of the Hungarian Special Interest Group
- ✳ JewishGen's Volunteer of the Year award: Susana Leistner Bloch.
- ✳ The Stern Grant: A Nação Hebrea for A Relational Prosopographic Database of the Portuguese Jewish Nation 1500-1800 (partial funding of a much larger project)



Members of the Australian contingent: Evelyn Frybort, Robyn Dryen and Sarah & Nigel Meinrath.
Photo credit: Robyn Dryen

The frustrating fate of the record books of the Jews from Egypt

Dani Haski

In July 2016, the newspaper [Egypt Independent](#) reported the death of Lucy Saul. Saul's passing reduced the official Jewish population of Cairo to just six old and increasingly frail women. In an [interview with the BBC](#) a couple of years ago, Magda Haroun, the nominal head of the Cairo Jewish community, voiced her anguish at what would happen to the cultural legacy of this once thriving community. Unfortunately, Mrs Haroun had proved to be just as resistant as her predecessor, the late, formidable Carmen Weinstein, when it came to facilitating access to the large library of community registers housed in the various synagogues to those who have been fighting for decades to preserve this rich heritage, so her lamentations were somewhat disingenuous.



Magda Haroun Photo: YouTube Screenshot

And then, in early April 2016, Ms Haroun gave the libraries of the Adly, Ben Ezra and Abbasseya Synagogues, in their entirety, to the National Archives of Egypt. She did this without consulting any of the organisations which had been fighting to digitise and preserve these records. Upon receiving these assets in Cairo, officials from the National Archive descended on the community in Alexandria, who had shown no such desire to surrender their heritage. M. Ben Gaon, the community leader, was pressured to hand over their collections to the archives as well. These included personal religious and civil identity registers dating back to 1830. Placing these records with the Egyptian Archives has not so far improved access. Those fighting to save them are concerned that the records will simply disappear into this vast collection, much like the Ark of the Covenant at the end of Hollywood movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, never to be seen again.

Egypt and the Jewish people have a history going back to before Moses. In more recent times, Egypt was home to a thriving and successful Jewish community, numbering over 80,000 through the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. In synagogues across the country, the day-to-day lives of the community—births, bris and bar-mitzvahs, marriages, divorces and deaths—were dutifully recorded by hand in hundreds of leather-bound registers. No one foresaw the tumultuous turn the twentieth century would take. Sadly, after WWII and with the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the fall of the monarchy and the Suez crisis in the 1950s, the community was forced into what many today call the Second Exodus.

For individuals with roots in Egypt, it has been an increasingly frustrating and difficult exercise to access those vital genealogical records; records which are more than historical curiosities and can actually be crucial in matters of religious identity—often being the only way some people can verify their Jewish status for religious purposes.

The [Association Internationale Nebi Daniel](#), based in France, has been working tirelessly for years for the opportunity to access, digitise and preserve these record books. They were close to success in 2010, having secured a letter from the then Culture Minister, M. Farouk Hosni, acknowledging the legitimacy of their claim.

And then came Tahrir Square. The Arab Spring in Egypt threw the whole project back to square one. Hopes were once again raised with the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood administration, but after fruitless attempts to revive negotiations through official channels, Yves Fedida, from Nebi Daniel and the The Heritage of Jews in Egypt facebook page, initiated a [change.org](#) petition addressed directly to President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and the current Minister of Culture M. Helmy Namnam, exhorting them to urgently authorise:

- the scanning of all existing Jewish archives, particularly religious and civil identity records, and making the scans freely available;
- the donation to various Jewish community synagogues across the world of some of the 150 Torah scrolls which fall outside the 100 years Egyptian Antiquities rule;
- the restoration of the existing synagogues and cemeteries, in particular, the Bassatine cemetery in Cairo – one of the oldest Jewish cemeteries in the world – giving easy access both virtually and on the spot;

- the development of a comprehensive inventory of the remaining communal assets and of a plan for their preservation; and
- the creation, within one of the existing synagogues, of a museum of Egyptian Jewish heritage, which would encourage tourism.

A copy of the petition, which has, to date, gathered more than 1,500 signatures, was also sent to the Egyptian Ambassadors in France, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland, Israel, Canada, the U.S.A., Brazil and Australia. Not a single diplomat has responded. (I contacted the Egyptian Consul-General to Australia in Sydney for comment, but, at the time of publication, none has been forthcoming).

The main concern of Egyptian authorities appears to be a perceived threat of reparations being demanded by descendants of Jews who were expelled and whose businesses and properties were confiscated. The reality is that none of the registers in question have any connection to property ownership and cannot be used for this purpose. Separate cases for reparations have already been prosecuted in the Egyptian courts and settled by individuals.

There is, in fact, no good reason to withhold permission for access to, and preservation of, these records, particularly when Nebi Daniel has committed to footing the bill for the whole exercise, to ensure positive PR and media coverage for the Egyptian government, and to leave the physical registers in Egypt.

The Egyptian Government is not blind to the value of its Jewish cultural heritage. In 2010, the government invested almost 8.5 Million Egyptian pounds (US\$950,000) in restoring the Maimonides Synagogue in Cairo and opening it to the public as a museum.



Yves Fedida (left) of Nebi Daniel with M Farouk Hosny, former Egyptian Minister for Culture, in 2010 Photo Credit: Association Internationale Nebi Daniel (2010)



Community Registers in Alexandria. Photo Credit: Association Nebi Daniel

As recently as early September this year, a report in [Al Monitor](#) quoted the current head of the Islamic and Coptic Monuments Department at the Ministry of Antiquities (who is also responsible for Jewish antiquities), M. Saeed Helmy, as saying: *“I know very well that the Egyptian monuments — including the Jewish antiquities — capture the attention of people all around the world. Therefore, I’d like to make it clear that Egypt pays considerable attention to its monuments, whether they are Islamic, Coptic or Christian, ... However, we need the support of the countries that are interested in cultural heritage in order to protect these great antiquities.”*

Collection of the Jewish community registers might have been an unwritten part of this response, as on June 11, the Ministry announced the formation of a special committee, with Helmy as its chair, to take stock of Jewish antiquities and register them in the ministry’s records – an activity undertaken several times already by previous Antiquities ministers. But he admitted that, with the drastic fall in tourism revenue, the country had scarce funds to achieve their goals.

But should the community registers be classified as antiquities or artefacts?

Their importance lies more in the information they contain, than in the physical books themselves. Unfortunately, the Ministry has consistently ignored repeated offers of financial assistance from Association Internationale Nebi Daniel specifically to preserve these books and to help raise money for other preservation activities. It appears that this very public show of attention to part of Egypt’s recent history might simply, once again, be mere lip service, as it coincided with M Helmy’s meeting with the US cultural attaché in August 2016.

So what is to be done?

Egypt claims it wants to preserve these artefacts and records but cannot afford to. Members of the diaspora have repeatedly offered to help raise money and to pay for the preservation, digitising and indexing of important community registers, on the proviso that these records are available to the international community.

Are the Egyptian Authorities deaf? Have the messages been lost in translation?

Or is the Egyptian Government simply telling the international community what it wants to hear while continuing to do absolutely nothing?

Disclaimer: My father was a refugee from Egypt. I have a personal stake in wanting to access his records, along with those of his parents and grandparents so that I can understand more of my family's history.



JIFF's Genealogical Gems



[The Jewish International Film Festival \(JIFF\)](#) is on in October/ November, with screenings around the country. Every year, the festival has, among its collection of films from around the world, stories which may be of particular interest to family historians. This year is no different, with some absolute gems which highlight fascinating family secrets.

**The Bentwich Syndrome – DIR: Gur Bentwich,
Israel / 2015 / Documentary / 68 mins / English, Hebrew (subtitled)**

Director Gur Bentwich explores his family's unique malady: a psychosomatic affliction causing sufferers to glorify their family heritage and exaggerate its importance. Presenting an unorthodox and heartwarming look at Jewish hopes and dreams from the turn of the century to the formation of the State of Israel, Bentwich uncovers a remarkable story of fervent Zionists, inspired artists, and determined rebels.



The Bentwich Syndrome was nominated for Best Documentary at the 2015 Ophir Awards (Israeli Oscars).

Watch the [TRAILER](#)

**Aida's Secrets – DIR: Alon and Shaul Schwartz
Israel, USA, Canada, Germany | 2016 | Documentary | 90 mins | Hebrew (subtitled)**



Family secrets and generations of contemporary history are uncovered in this sweeping documentary which begins with World War Two and concludes with an emotional family reunion. Born in the Bergen- Belson DP camp at the end of the war, brothers Izac and Shep Szelewicz were adopted out as children and were reunited only when they are in their 70s. Timely questions of identity, resilience and the plight of displaced persons are brought to life in this film as they finally meet in Canada, and then travel to a nursing home in Quebec to meet their elderly mother, the

mysterious Aida. With help from Yad Vashem and My Heritage, details of their birth mother, a possible third brother in Canada and their father's true identity slowly emerge in this intensely personal investigative documentary.

Watch the [TRAILER](#)

Monsieur Mayonnaise

England, Germany, France, USA | 2016 | Documentary | 95 mins | English

Monsieur Mayonnaise is a richly textured road movie starring real-life heroes, Nazi villains and actual werewolves, liberally layered with lashings of French mayonnaise! Australian pop-artist and Hollywood cult-horror movie director, Philippe Mora, investigates his father's clandestine role in the French Résistance in WW2 and his mother's miraculous escape *en route* to Auschwitz, as he embarks on a journey to create an audacious comic book to tell his family's story.



Watch the [TRAILER](#)

Trezoros, the Lost Jews of Kastoria

USA | 2016 | Documentary | 93 mins | English, Greek (subtitled)



Set in the idyllic Greek city of Kastoria, where Jews and Christians lived in harmony for over two millennia, this moving documentary illuminates the lives of a Greek Sephardic community whose story speaks for all people who have been annihilated by war and discrimination. Using never before seen archival footage, vibrantly bringing to life just one of the many Jewish communities which had existed in Greece before the end of World War II, "Trezoros" (Ladino/Judeo-Spanish term of endearment meaning "Treasures")

is a highly emotional story told by its survivors, with interviews filmed on location in Kastoria, Thessaloniki, Athens, Tzur Moshe, Tel Aviv, Miami, Los Angeles and New York.

Watch the [TRAILER](#)

The Origin of Violence (L'origine de la violence)

France, Germany | 2016 | 1h 56min | Drama, Romance | French, German (subtitled)

The Origin of Violence is a 2016 Franco-German drama film directed by Élie Chouraqui, based on the Prix Renaudot-winning novel of the same name by Fabrice Humbert.

While visiting the Buchenwald concentration camp, Nathan Fabre, a young professor, discovers a photograph of a prisoner who bears an astounding resemblance to his father, Adrien. Back in France, the memory of that photograph continues to haunt him. Faced with silence from his father, Nathan decides to look into his family's history and unearths secrets others have worked a life-time to keep buried.

Watch the [TRAILER](#)

There will be screenings in Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Brisbane Canberra and Perth.

Further details, session times and tickets are available through the [JIFF website](#).

Keeping it in the family: Dr Tanya Evans

Dr Tanya Evans, a history lecturer and researcher at Macquarie University and President of the History Council of New South Wales, is embarking on a fascinating research project to examine the practice and meanings of family history in Australia, England and Canada. She is looking for participants amongst family historians in the Jewish community.

She has published several books, the most recent of which, ***Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales***, recently won the 2016 NSW Premier's Community and Regional History Prize at the National Library.



Dr Evans will be sharing the ways in which she collaborates with family historians and discussing her new project at our Sunday Morning workshop on November 6th at 10:30am. Please come along and find how you can take part in this important research.

Alternatively, to participate in this research please contact Dr Evans directly: tanya.evans@mq.edu.au

I caught up with Dr Evans before she went overseas to continue her research.

Edited abstracts from my Interview with Dr Tanya Evans (Please do not quote verbatim without first checking directly with Dr Evans)

AJGS: Tell me a little about your own professional history and how you came to write *Fractured Families*.

TE: I've always been a historian of poverty and the marginalised. My PhD was on unmarried motherhood in 18th century London. I moved from that project to working on a history of unwed motherhood in 20th Century England. But in between those two projects, I got funding to research the orphan schools and the Benevolent Society in Sydney, institutions quite similar to the institutions I researched in London. I became increasingly interested in comparing the lives of the world's poorest in the 19th and 20th century.

At that point, family history wasn't on my horizon. Clearly, I was the historian of the family and I've worked on that for over 20 years. I was becoming increasingly aware of how important family history was when I was surrounded by family historians while undertaking research in the archives. Lots of historians have said this, many academics have talked about this phenomenon, but I was intrigued by the different ways in which we were understood by those genealogists. I was the historian of the family but I wasn't understood as a 'family historian'.

When I moved to Australia in 2008, I got a research fellowship for a project on Transnational History of the Family in 19th Century Australia. I was looking forward to a change; looking forward to an intellectual change, and looking forward to examining the history of the family in a different national context. And also the ways in which families move between different national contexts.

I am a chatty sort of person. I talk to librarians and archivists because they point you in the direction of useful sources, ones that you haven't necessarily thought of yourself. In a conversation with somebody at the Mitchell Library about the Benevolent Society archives, they told me that the biggest users of the archive were family historians; not academics, not journalists. And that got me thinking.

I started to work for The Benevolent Society on all sorts of projects associated with their 200-year celebration. As result, I started to write a lot more about the phenomenon of family history. I put a callout via The Society of Australian Genealogist Newsletter for people to share their family histories, because I was really interested in how academic historians might learn from family historians, but also about the practice of family history and how that was transforming people's identity and understanding of history.

In order to obtain access to the Benevolent Society archives, you need to write to get a letter of permission because the archives are closed. It might seem a bit exclusive, but it's great because it means they have lots of detail about the people who've used the archive and I could, hopefully, get in contact with them.

I worked in collaboration with a handful of those people to write my book, ***Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales***. I was trying to reveal the history of colonial Australia's poorest, but also to explore the motivations of family historians working on the history of their poor ancestors and to find out what impact that was having on them in the present.

So I became increasingly interested in the motivations for family historical research and then how that was transforming people's historical consciousness.

AJGS: What were the main things you learned from writing that book?

TE: As I'm also a feminist historian, I'm always interested in charting and exploring the particular structure of the disadvantages that women faced and still face. The reasons for women's poverty today are much like the reasons in the 19th century. They're the ones left holding the baby, they're often the ones with less education, and fewer skills. If you leave a woman with 10 children, she's going to find it really hard to support herself and those children. So what I wanted to do was to bring the experiences of women like

that and the very poor into the foreground and give their lives a dignity they never had in the 19th century. Their lives weren't memorialized. They ended up in poor graves. They ended up not being remembered by anybody, with families fractured all over the place. So I wanted to give them dignity, just like their descendants want to do. They want to memorialize these people's lives.

That was the key and I became increasingly interested in those family historians. What was driving their research? How was it changing their understanding of history? And as someone passionate about lifelong learning, what was driving these people? Was it making an impact up them as individuals and on the societies they live amongst? Was it changing the way in which they live? How was it transforming these people?

AJGS: Have you noticed a difference in approaches to the study of family history amongst the different communities you've looked at?

TE: As someone trained as a historian of Britain and now working on the history of Australia, I look at the links between them. Clearly, the global connections are significant. The trouble, I think, is our understanding of national history and transnational history. I really wanted to look at the ways in which a particular moment in history becomes significant to people. So, we know in Australia that family history became much more popular after the bicentenary. I did some reading on Canada and on the settler migrant nations, to compare and contrast with Australia. I was thinking, "Is there a national moment there?" and there is. There's the confederation – the anniversary of the confederation of Canada in 1967 is a kind of light bulb moment and family history becomes very, very popular. So that's what started to get me excited.

So I put a call out via Ancestry's Facebook and Twitter page, thinking that that would draw in a nice, broad range of family historians. I knew of the Society of Australian Genealogists, whose membership was a particular mix, a particular socio economic group – they're drawn particularly from the northern suburbs of Sydney. There are a few members from the eastern suburbs, but not many. Predominantly white, predominantly affluent. Very *Anglo*-Australian. With my callout on *Ancestry* and *Inside History* magazine, I was inundated with responses. That's the joy about family historians. They're always willing to share their research and to communicate about their practice. But it struck me that most of the responses were again from Anglo-Australians. This was via social media and might say something about social media.

Then I was asked to give a paper at a conference in November called *Multilingual Sydney*. They wanted me to talk about the ways in which family history made an impact on multicultural communities. I thought that that was a great idea – but I had no data.

I've a lot of data about Anglo-Australians. And clearly, if I know anything about Italians and other cultural groups, I know that family is constantly evoked. It's powerful in the preservation of cultural traditions and familial traditions.

I started to read about Italian-Australians. Most of it is sociological, not much of it historical. So I contacted the big Italian-Australian organisation who've had a long-running family history association. I also got in touch with the Chinese-Australian Historical Society. I also sent interns off to the Sydney Jewish Museum and to the Sydney Jewish Historical Society.

I really want to compare and contrast the ways in which the different community and cultural groups and organisations are using family history.

The Jewish community in Sydney is actually the most cohesive culturally – maintaining that cohesiveness in a way that other cultural groups are very anxious about – intermarriage or geographic dispersal. I cannot wait to chart more of that and the ways in which family history is being used by different families. Not just for passing on recipes but to constitute understandings of home and family when that family is so dispersed across different nations.

AJGS: Many people I speak to think that their family history is going to be boring or ordinary. You've studied the poor and the marginalised. What's your perception of "ordinary" people?

TE: My history is all about celebrating 'ordinary', because I think that everybody's extraordinary. I don't think anybody's life is boring. It's up to us to figure out a way to tell the story of somebody's life in order to make it interesting to others. So when I talk to family historians, I think that that's really important.

There are all sorts of reasons why people are producing family history. Sometimes it's just to be consumed within the family, to pass down the generations. But what I, as a historian, want to say is, "Look, you can make that story much more useful and compelling to others if you think about the ways in which you're framing it." And I think that it's important to do that because it will increase its audience, increase its impact and its value. We can all learn more about that person, yes, but also about society more broadly.

Your job is not just to describe somebody's life or to describe a moment in history. You need to think about the question: How is this life story changing the way in which you understand something? For example, I think that it's really important to locate a life in its context... broaden the socio-economic, cultural, political details you're talking about.

There's a really beautiful kind of synergy between family history and local history. For example, people don't always latch onto it, but we have so much to learn, such rich archives to work with that can catch some people's imaginations about all sorts of things.

I've written about why there is disdain for family history and why it is so important to challenge that at so many different levels. It's often class-based, it's often about gender; because family history is assumed to be something undertaken by women – mature women with nothing better to do – and that is profoundly misogynistic. We need to challenge why that is. Why do people value different sorts of research in particular ways?

My work is all about getting people to question those assumptions and to recognise the value of that labour and the sort of knowledge it's producing.

AJGS: How was the discipline of genealogy actually viewed by academic historians?

TE: In some ways it's quite hard to chart the way academics view family history. I've certainly pieced together what I can, but most often, that disdain is articulated orally and not in writing. If it were in writing it would make them look appalling, snobby, elitist, exclusivist.

A lot of my work is about challenging that, but what's interesting is the development over the last five years or so, in that retired academic historians are increasingly writing their own family histories. This has become a huge phenomenon and is selling like hotcakes, which I think is troubling the discipline or the hierarchies in those different practices. At the same time, I think that those people are still being quite, you know – "well, no, of course, I'm not like one of *those* sorts of family historians, I'm a different sort of family historian". There's still that kind of anxiety.

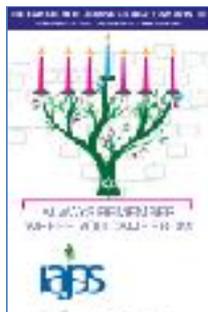
I'm trying to set-up a big centre for family history research which will help break down those boundaries, where we can collaborate more and share our different levels of expertise and knowledge.

Three years ago, when I used to talk to my students, they were incredibly disparaging about family history. But now, I have students increasingly using it (Ancestry) for student projects and it's particularly students from multicultural communities who are using it to consolidate their relationships with their grandparents. For example, they want to learn more about those migrants who came post-World War II and their own relationship through that, which is, I think, brilliant.



News

November is International Jewish Genealogy Month



The International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) has dedicated the Hebrew month *Cheshvan* to Jewish Genealogy. This year, *Cheshvan* coincides with November! IAJGS runs a poster competition to help celebrate IJGM. The 2016 winner is Jillian Beroza, of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Long Island.

[International Jewish Genealogy Month](#) was initially developed by *Avotaynu* in 1999, but has been under the auspices of IAJGS since 2007. It's a time for member organisations to actively promote Jewish Genealogy and publicise special events to a wider audience.

Yizkor Book translations published in hard cover

On September 23rd, JewishGen's Yizkor-Books-In-Print project announced the publication of the 548-page translation of the *Goniadz Yizkor Book*, now available from Amazon for a discounted price of US\$41 jewishgen.org/yizkor/ybip/YBIP_Goniadz.html

On September 13, Yizkor-Books-In-Print announced the publication of the 480-page translation containing material about Bacau, Iasi and Podu Iloaiei, Romania, originally published in Romanian: *Trilogy of Three Romanian Jewish Communities - Bacau, Iasi and Podu Iloaiei* by I. Kara, a noted Romanian Yiddish scholar. It is now available from Amazon for a discounted price of US\$41, list Price: US\$56.95 See jewishgen.org/yizkor/ybip/YBIP_Romania.html for details.

A special reduced price of US\$25 per book is available for orders of 5 or more books to one address in the US, UK, Australia or Canada. Email ybip@jewishgen.org for details.

Posted to Jewishgen Facebook Page by Joel Alpert

New Book: *Where The Jews Aren't* by Masha Gessen

Penguin Random House has published [*Where the Jews Aren't--The sad and absurd story of Birobidzhan, Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region*](#) By Masha Gessen; part of its Jewish Encounters Series.

In 1929, the Soviet government set aside a sparsely populated area in the Soviet Far East for settlement by Jews. The place was called Birobidzhan. The idea of an autonomous Jewish region was championed by Jewish Communists, Yiddishists, and intellectuals, who envisioned a haven of post-oppression Jewish culture. The state-building ended with arrests and purges instigated by Stalin. After the Second World War, Birobidzhan received another influx of Jews – those who had been dispossessed by the war. A second wave of arrests and imprisonments swept through the area, traumatising Birobidzhan's Jews into silence and effectively shutting down most of the Jewish cultural enterprises. *Where the Jews Aren't* is a haunting account of the dream of Birobidzhan – and how it became the cracked and crooked mirror in which we can see the true story of the Jews in twentieth-century Russia.

The book reveals the complex, strange, and heart-wrenching truth behind a familiar narrative which begins with pogroms and ends with emigration.

Western Australia offers cheaper BDM Certificates

The WA Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages is now offering the option of purchasing uncertified copies of BDM certificates to assist with family history. The price of an uncertified certificate is now \$20, while the price of a certified certificate remains at \$48.

To obtain a certificate you must apply directly to the Registrar in Perth online or by mail. bdm.dotag.wa.gov.au/U/uncertified_copies

Updated JGSGB *Guide to Jewish genealogy in Latvia and Estonia*

Arlene Beare has updated her [Guide to Jewish genealogy in Latvia and Estonia](#). It is now available in hard-cover and e-book format from JGSGB (Jewish Genealogical Society Great Britain), who benefit from the sales. The previous edition of the book was released in 2006; many contact details for archives have changed. These have all been updated.

There is information on both Internal and external passports and a chapter written by Nick Evans on emigration, detailing how our ancestors got to other countries from Latvia – always remembering that many Lithuanians might have sailed from Libau (now Liepaja). There is also a brief chapter on sources in the UK with a direct link to the UK National Archives.

This guide will be of enormous use to those researching not only Latvia and Estonia, but also elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

National Archives move mountains to preserve Australia's history

The National Archives of Australia will soon begin to move millions of Commonwealth records to a purpose-built National Archives Preservation Facility being constructed in Canberra. *'The environmentally designed facility is capable of housing 104 shelf kilometres of paper and 9.6 shelf kilometres of audiovisual records, together with 150 staff,'* explained Gavin Edgar, General Manager of Development for Doma Group, the builder of the facility.

The new building will give the Archives room to move, containing a digital archive as well as space for tangible records. *'While we move records fairly frequently, the relocation of records to the National Archives Preservation Facility is the largest in our history. Between November 2016 and June 2017, we will be consolidating collections from three repositories. During this time, there will be some disruption to public access to records as we move and unpack the collection in its new home. We will endeavour to minimise any inconvenience throughout this relocation process,'* said Archives' Director-General, David Fricker.

In the 1970s, the Archives determined that purpose-built repositories were the first line of defence for the nation's heritage. Completion of the 17,500 square metre facility is on track for February 2017, with a handover of the first separable portion in November 2016. The building will hold 25 per cent of the Archives' current collection and has the ability for future expansion, if required.

Source: [National Archives of Australia](#)

2016 Australian Census Shemozzle

As we all know, historic census data can give us valuable insights into our ancestors' lives. Unlike in the US and UK, Australian personal identity information is immediately separated from census data, but connected by an encryption key for a finite period of time to help the ABS connect other data points for their research. Australians can then opt-in to voluntarily re-connect their data to their identity after 100 years. For those who choose not to, identifying data is eventually purged.

The census rolls around every 5 years. This year's national snapshot was conducted on August 9 ... almost. 2016 was to be the first year the census was expected to be mostly completed online, but by the time the vast majority of Australian households went to fill out their form in the early evening, the site was down and reports of a hack were all over social media and the nightly news. Privacy advocates and civil libertarians had previously raised concerns about reports that the ABS



would be holding on to identification data for longer than previous census collections. Many felt vindicated when the site collapsed.

The truth is the site was not hacked, but was subjected to a DDoS, or Distributed Denial of Service, attack where millions of 'zombie' computers attempt to access the site simultaneously, creating an effective gridlock for legitimate users. Because there were four DDoS attacks across the day, the ABS decided to take the site down at around 7:30 pm. after the last one. The site was re-instated with extra security protocols within a couple of days and the public urged to "pause" and finally fill out their form. By the time the survey closed on September 25, more than 95% of households had apparently completed the census.

The minister responsible for the census, Minister for Small Business Michael McCormack, and the ABS worked overtime to re-assure the public that no private information had been compromised, but the reputational damage to the ABS and the census was considerable. On September 23rd, in its submission to a Senate inquiry into the disaster, the ABS laid responsibility squarely at the feet of its service provider, IBM, saying *"the ABS had sought and received various assurances from IBM about operational preparedness and resilience to DDoS attacks... At no time was the ABS offered or advised of additional DDoS protections that could be put into place."*

The Senate inquiry continues and the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, has been reported as saying *"which heads roll, where and when, will be determined once the review is complete"*.

My Heritage half-way to digitising every Cemetery in Israel

My Heritage has [announced](#) that they are half-way towards their goal of digitising every cemetery in Israel — aiming to make it the first country in the world to have all its gravestones preserved online and searchable. In 2014, My Heritage launched a [global initiative](#) with BillionGraves to digitally preserve the world's cemeteries. By photographing and documenting gravestones using the BillionGraves mobile application, the precise GPS coordinates of every gravestone are preserved. This makes it easy for others to locate and visit graves of family members and allows volunteers to see which areas of a cemetery have already been photographed, avoiding duplication and maximising productivity. They have now extended that original initiative, pledging to photograph every cemetery and gravestone in Israel and to transcribe the information on each and every gravestone. All of this data will be available free on MyHeritage.

Call for participants — Avotaynu DNA Sephardi Study

Avotaynu DNA is recruiting male participants for a study of Eastern and Western Sephardi paternal DNA lineages. Eligible participants for the Western DNA study must be direct paternal-line descendants of members of the historic Western Sephardi communities of Amsterdam, London, Livorno, Venice, Bordeaux and Southwest France, and of their New World offspring communities in Curacao, Suriname, and North America. Eligible participants for the Eastern Sephardi paternal DNA study must be direct paternal-line descendants of paternal lines of the eastern Mediterranean; specifically men whose family directly descends through Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Rhodes and related areas.

The project, led by pioneering genetic genealogist, Dr. Karl Skorecki, of the Technion, hopes to shed light on the origins of the Western Sephardim and to establish a strong data-set of DNA results, grounded in archival research, in order to stimulate further intensive studies. The detailed study protocol can be found here: avotaynuonline.com/a-genetic-study-of-western-sephardic-jewish-men/

If you are interested in participating, or know someone who might be eligible, please contact Project administrators Adam Brown and Michael Waas at WestSephDNA@gmail.com for further information.

Source: [Avotaynu Online](#)

Call for Volunteers — Transylvania registers

JewishGen have acquired a new batch of records from Transylvania and need volunteers to work on transcription. This batch includes Jewish and civil records from Arad, Cluj, Beclean, Harghita, and Sfante Gheorge. If you're researching families from this part of pre-Trianon Hungary or just enjoy indexing, please contact Vivian Kahn vkahn@kmort.com, JewishGen Hungarian SIG Coordinator

Call for Volunteers — Fromelles

From the Society of Australian Genealogists: Can you help put a name to the unidentified Australian soldiers buried in Fromelles?

The Fromelles Association of Australia helps the Australian Army identify soldiers lying in unmarked graves in the Pheasant Wood Military Cemetery in Fromelles. Volunteers do this by creating a family tree of each soldier and identifying a living family member willing to donate the requisite DNA so that these can be matched with DNA from remains found in Pheasant Wood. The work is time-consuming and frequently difficult, given that many of the young WWI soldiers gave false information on their enlistment papers or left few records behind.

The Association would be delighted to hear from any researcher who would be willing to volunteer to assist with its work to find out more see their [facebook page](#) or via the [Australian Army website](#).

Useful and interesting websites

A day in the life of a family history librarian

[National Library of Australia Blog](#)

The National Library is one of the first ports of call for Australian family history researchers – most notably through their extraordinary TROVE resource. But what's it like to work there? Danielle Edmonson from the NLA spent the day with Ralph, Shannon and Leisa, three members of the Newspaper and Family History Team to find out what life was like behind the stacks. You can [read the blog here...](#)

New Ancestry UK Podcast – It's About Time

ancestry.co.uk/cs/its-about-time

In September, Ancestry UK launched a new podcast series called *It's About Time*, hosted by history tragic Sir Tony Robinson. Highlighting lesser-known stories about individuals and families, season 1 covers stories of murder, migration and Mark Hamill's* great-great-grandfather. If you're not familiar with what a podcast is, it's a digital radio show available to listen to anywhere, any time, via the Internet. To listen to *It's About Time*, go to their [website](#) or search for *It's About Time* in your favourite podcatcher.

(*Mark Hamill is the actor who played Luke Skywalker in the original Star Wars movies)

Genealogy Guys & Genealogy Connection Podcast

genealogyguys.com

Speaking of podcasts, the Genealogy Guys, George G Morgan and Drew Smith from Aha Seminars, started a new podcast in June called *Genealogy Connections*. The original *Genealogy Guys* podcast is one of the longest-running on this subject, having started in 2005. Hosted by Smith, *Genealogy Connections* present interviews with genealogical experts, authors, librarians and archivists, data-base service providers, software and technology developers, and other leaders in the community. Each episode is approximately one hour and can be downloaded from their [website](#) or search for *Genealogy Connections* using your favourite podcatcher.

Webcast: Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books

[Library of Congress Webcast](#)

In this one hour video podcast, Mark Glickman discusses his book, ***Stolen Words: The Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books***, an epic story about the tens of millions of books the Nazis looted from European Jewish families and institutions during WWII.

*(NB: You will need to have the flash player plugin installed to view this content.
A link to a transcript is available on the webpage.)*

UK National Archives: Naturalisation casepapers and Aliens' registration cards

[National Archives UK](#)

Explore the collections of aliens' registration cards and naturalisation case-papers to uncover the stories of the people who travelled to the UK and made it their home.

[Search and download aliens' registration cards \(MEPO 35\) 1918-1947](#)

[Search and download naturalisation casepapers \(HO 1\) 1801-1871](#)

State Records NSW revamps its website

[NSW State Records](#)

State Records NSW has launched its new website, which includes a new search engine for their collections. Researchers can now do a simple, single-field search to discover photographic and documentary content from amongst the Collection. The online indexes are accessible via the new website, but have not yet been migrated into the new system. This will be an ongoing process over several months. Once each index is migrated, they will also appear in the Collection Search results.

New Issue of Southern African SIG Newsletter Online

jewishgen.org/safrica/newsletter/index

The latest issue of the Southern African SIG (SA-SIG) Newsletter is now available online. Previous issues of the newsletter can be found at that location as well.

Credit: Gary Mokotoff, Nu? What's New?

Randy Schoenberg: What's New With Austrian and Czech Jewish Genealogy?

[What's New With Austrian and Czech Jewish Genealogy?](#)

Randy Schoenberg has uploaded his PowerPoint presentation from the 2016 IAJGS conference. The presentation covers updates to Jewishgen, cemetery records and newspaper resources, among many other areas relating to records from the Czech Republic and Austria. The links in the headings are live and the whole presentation can be viewed online or downloaded via dropbox.

Israel Genealogy Research Association – New and Updated Records

[IGRA's Latest Updates](#)

In the lead up to the IAJGS conference in Seattle this year, IGRA released a list of some of the new and updated records in its collection. They include:

- **Marriage Registrations in Jerusalem 1905-1913:** This is a partial list from the ledger found in the Archive of the Council of the Sephardi and Oriental Communities, Jerusalem, found in the [Jerusalem Municipal Archives](#). It contains 2,238 brides and grooms (1,119 couples) with names of their fathers and the date of their marriage.
- **Marriage & Divorce Certificates issued during the Mandate Period 1921-1948:** The [Israel State Archives](#) has asked IGRA to build a data-base of over 50,000 certificates from this period. The project will take 3-4 years.

- **Pinkas Bogrim (Adult Lists = Voters List) for Knesset Israel 1942:** This is another name for the voters' lists for the Knesset Israel under the British Administration. This addition adds 15 new settlements and close to 2000 voters.

There are also more contemporary records such as a list of elected officials for various local elections throughout Israel from 2008 and 2012.

Jewish Photo Library

[Blog & Galleries](#)

British born, Japan-based photographer Jono David has a fascinating blog and photo gallery website for his project **HaChayim HaYehudim Jewish Photo Library** - "documenting the Jewish world one photograph at a time". His website claims that he has over 100,000 photographs, taken across 6 continents (although there are no images in the Antarctic gallery yet) and 116 countries and territories – from Angola to Zimbabwe via Iceland, the Netherlands and Taiwan! The images cover synagogues, cemeteries, museums and people and much more. He has travelled far and wide to take intimate and highly personal images. His blog describes the efforts he has taken to acquire his images and the adventures he has had along the way. If you're looking to learn about contemporary communities in far-flung locations, this is an interesting resource.

David has been widely published in the international press. As he is a professional photographer, this collection is covered by full copyright. Images can be [licensed](#) for specific uses but cannot be downloaded or used without permission.

Historical Irish Civil Register records now available online

civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/civil-search.jsp

The General Record Office (GRO) of Ireland has made their civil registers of birth, marriage and death available on the website IrishGenealogy.ie a state-run website. The records are available free.

The Birth Records Indexes date from 1864 to 1914, the Marriage Records Indexes from 1845 (1864 for Roman Catholic Marriages) to 1939 and the Death Records Indexes from 1864 to 1964. There is an enhancement of the Marriage Indexes, with both parties to the Marriage now being shown from 1882 onwards.

Indexes to births 100 years or more old, the indexes to marriages 75 years or more, and the indexes to deaths 50 years old or over are available. You will no longer have to order an official certificate or visit the GRO of Ireland. In accordance with privacy legislation, indexes for records younger than the aforementioned years are not available to search.

If there is no number next to the Group Registration Number which appears on the results, it means that there is, as yet, no image. Not all registers are available and there does not appear to be any mention of when the missing ones will be digitised.

Thanks to Jan Meisels Allen.



Remaining Workshop Dates for 2016

The Society will hold workshops on the following dates at:

Rev Katz Library, North Shore Synagogue, Treatts Road, Lindfield:

Sunday workshops 9.30am to 12.30pm	Monday workshops 10.00am to 1.00pm
9 October	31 October
6 November	21 November
4 December	19 December

Other Events

Shalom: Film Screening + Q&A - Karski & The Lords of Humanity

shalom.edu.au/event/karski-the-lords-of-humanity-qa/

October 27, 2016, 6:30pm Event Cinema, Bondi Junction.

Jan Karski, a member of the Polish underground, tried to tell the world about what was happening to the Jews of Europe in WWII. He took his eyewitness accounts to the pinnacle of western leadership. He failed. This screening will be followed by a Q&A with Emmy Award-winning Polish director, Slawomir Grunberg, and theatre director, Moira Blumenthal.

Keeping it in the family: Dr Tanya Evans

November 6, 10:30am, North Shore Synagogue, Treats Rd Lindfield

To celebrate International Jewish Genealogy Month AJGS is pleased to present Dr Tanya Evans, a history lecturer and researcher at Macquarie University and President of the History Council of New South Wales.

Dr Evans will be sharing the ways she collaborates with family historians and discussing her new project at our Sunday Morning workshop on November 6th at 10:30am. Please come along and find out you can participate in this important and fascinating research.

Dr Evans has published several books, the most recent of which, *Fractured Families: Life on the Margins in Colonial New South Wales*, recently won the 2016 NSW Premier's Community and NSW Regional History Prize at the National Library.

The Last Word

Diving into the minutiae of genealogical news and views has been a challenging undertaking. There is so much going on in the field and so many areas of interest that choosing what would be of interest to our readership was a daunting task. I was extremely honoured to interview Dr Tanya Evans and urge everyone to attend her presentation in November. The relationship between individual family historians and the academy has long been fraught. Dr Evans is building a bridge between personal, local and global histories for all of us to traverse.

I'd like to thank Peter Arnold for his invaluable sub editing and our esteemed president, Robyn Dryen, for the opportunity to edit this edition of Kosher Koala. I hope you enjoy it.

Dani Haski

Guest Editor: ed@ajgs.org.au