



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH GENEALOGY AND PAUL JACOBI CENTER

AT THE JEWISH NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, JERUSALEM

6-Month Report July – December 2010

A. Executive Summary

The Institute, having opened its doors in January 2006, is almost exactly 5 years old. It has established a regular rhythm of programmes and activities, based in the main on its high-level research projects and its attempts to further the teaching of Jewish Genealogy at the university level.

IJG continues to work for its primary goal of advancing the status of Jewish Genealogy as a sub-branch of Jewish Studies. To that end, it presented a first-ever panel on Jewish Genealogy at the 9th Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies (Ravenna, July 2010). Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go before Jewish Genealogy is fully recognised as a branch of Jewish Studies, especially in the US.

The Institute's attempts to bring serious Jewish Genealogy to wider audiences are beginning to show fruit. The leadership of the Scottish Jewish community has expressed interest in a collaborative project with IJG aiming at a "Demographic and Genealogical Survey on Scottish Jewish" since its emergence two centuries ago.

The Institute invited an outside observer to conduct a Cost-Benefit analysis of its first 4½ years. The findings were encouraging, challenging and timely.

Fundraising remains extremely problematic. Rather than continuing to seek "general support" grants (undesignated funds) in the current economic climate, the Institute is moving towards the marketing of carefully crafted research packages, designed to appeal to specific donors.

B. Detail

I. **Primary Goals:**

1. Status of Jewish Genealogy

As indicated in previous reports, a demonstrable measure of any subject's academic standing is its acceptance at learned conferences and participation in them. In the last six months, the Institute has experienced one additional success in this area and one reverse.

a. EAJS

IJG presented a first-ever panel on Jewish Genealogy at the 9th Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies, held in Ravenna in July. Two main points are to be noted: first, three of the four panelists were young scholars, something IJG wishes to encourage; and, second, by having shown an effective presence at this conference, the Institute laid the ground for participation in future scholarly events of this kind in Europe. The panelists and their topics were:

- i. Valts Apinis, University of Riga:
“Jews in Latvia in 1918-1940: a genealogical perspective”;
- ii. Dr. Federica Francesconi, University of Bologna and UCLA:
“An Alternative Path toward Emancipation: Jewish; Merchants and their Cross-Cultural Networks in 18th Century Italian Ghettos”;
- iii. Dr. Neville Lamdan, Hebrew University, Jerusalem:
“Village Jews in the 19th Century Minsk Gubernya through a Genealogical Lens”.
- iv. Maria Jose Surribas-Camps, University of Barcelona:
“Connecting with the Lives and Lineages of Medieval Catalan Jews”.

b. AJS

The Institute’s bid, submitted by Prof. Sergio DellaPergola, the Chair of the Institute’s Academic Committee, to take part in the Conference of the Association of Jewish Studies, held in Boston at the end of December, was rejected - on the ostensible grounds that the Conference was over-subscribed! It seems clear that traditional Jewish Studies scholars in certain circles, perhaps especially in the United States, continue to evince scepticism as regards the seriousness of Jewish genealogy and its legitimacy at the academic level. It follows that there is still a very long way to go and much work to be done before Jewish Genealogy is fully recognised as a branch of Jewish Studies.

2. Research

a. Research Grants

In September, the Institute awarded a research grant to Dr. Erzsébet Mislovics, a young Hungarian scholar with a doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Her research will focus on two leading Hungarian families, the Munks and the Goldzihers, from the 18th to the 20th centuries. Archival and printed sources will allow a detailed reconstruction of the genealogy and “demography” of these two representative families, including their geographic, social, economic and occupational mobility, education and religious affiliations, and responses to cultural and political change. In sum, the study will make a significant contribution to the understanding of the Hungarian Jewry and its genealogy during a critical time-frame – embracing, for example, the period of Theodor Herzl - that witnessed the transition from a traditional Jewish environment to a modern, acculturated and in some cases highly assimilated milieu, with all the impacts the process inevitably had on the Hungarian Jewish family.

b. Research Results from IJG Projects

Dr. Federica Francesconi recently submitted a highly professional final report on her work on “Jewish; Merchants and their Cross-Cultural Networks in 18th Century Italian Ghettos”. Additional final reports are expected shortly from Maria Jose Surribas regarding her research into “Lives and Lineages of Medieval Catalan Jews”; from Prof. Howard Lupovitch on his work into the Communal Protocols and the Mini-Biographies of Hungarian Jews; and from Prof. Ruth Kark, together with Dr. Joseph Glass, on their investigations into elite Sephardi families in the late Ottoman and early mandatory Palestine. Similarly, an encouraging mid-term report has been received from Prof. Ruven Ferber’s team investigating genealogical aspects of Latvian Jewry between the two World Wars. All of these reports will be posted on the Institute’s website in the near future.

In parallel, Prof. Eric Goldstein is in the final stages of writing up his Institute research in the form of an extended article, scheduled to appear in next year’s volume of *POLIN*, a scholarly publication devoted to Jews in Poland and Eastern Europe in general.

c. "Leveraging" Institute Grants

One of our grant awardees reported in the last month that the funding he received two years ago from the Institute has proved to be "seed money" for a larger research project he is proposing. He wrote that the substantial research results derived from his IJG project have allowed him to apply to Foundations for additional support. He then went on to observe that the Institute "may not have considered this aspect of what [its] grants can accomplish, but for large academic projects, initial grants that allow a project to get off the ground and then [to] leverage other major funding major funding ... *contribute in a major way to the advancement of scholarship.*" [italics added]

This is, in fact, the first time that this aspect of the Institute's funding of research has been drawn to our attention and it is, of course, most encouraging.

3. Teaching

It will be recalled that as of early this summer, a 1-year BA course in Jewish Genealogy, based on the detailed "Academic Guidelines" prepared by the Institute's Teaching Committee in 2008-09, was under review at a major US university, with a view to being offered in the fall. Unfortunately, this pioneering initiative fell through because, for crippling budgetary reasons, the university in question decided to close its Jewish Studies department.

In the light of this development, IJG is continuing its efforts to find another university of standing to launch a Jewish Genealogy course.

In this connection, it should be mentioned that in the period under review, the Institute investigated the possibility of offering university-level course in Jewish Genealogy through some "distance learning" channel (similar, for example, to the Open University system in Israel and other countries). We have, however, concluded that this is not a feasible option for the Institute for two principal reasons. First, there are no effective protections on the Net against wholesale theft, however guarded the exposure of the course - and the extensive work behind it - may be [witness Wikileaks!]. Second, the costs, not so much of preparing the material for transmission *via* the Net, but of producing a text-book and teaching aids, engaging lecturers, servicing the students and maintaining the course year by year to keep ahead of "copycats" seeking to profit from it, are far beyond the Institute's present means.

II. New Horizons – Scottish Jewry Project

As part of its efforts to bring Jewish genealogy to wider audiences, the Institute proposed to the leadership of Scottish Jewry in October that a Demographic and Genealogical Survey should be conducted into Scottish Jewry since its emergence two centuries ago. The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities and the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council have expressed real interest in this idea and invited the Institute to submit a formal proposal on it, with a detailed time-frame and a budget, so that the ever-recurring problem of funding (and other aspects) can be seriously considered. A team of experts is currently working on the proposal, with a view to submitting it early in 2011.

The demographic side of this ground-breaking study will throw light on the numbers of East European immigrants who came to Scotland and where they came from. It will examine on the one hand the significant phenomenon of Jewish transmigration through

Scotland to the US and elsewhere, and on the other the dispersal and settlement patterns of those 1,000's of Jews who stayed in Scotland and established communities, large and small, throughout the country. The genealogical part of the survey will look at the "kinship

factor" between the immigrants, and also at the family connections that developed over time locally. Building on the solid research already done into the evolution of Scottish Jewry's institutions, the study will focus, among other things, on the elite groups, such as communal leadership, business dynasties, religious leadership, professional men and academics, who were the main driving forces behind the development of the institutional structure. Yet another focus for research will be the integration of Jews into the wider non-Jewish community, whilst seeking to maintain a separate Jewish identity.

If successfully carried out over the next two to three years, the end-product of this survey will be totally unique and original – the first-ever countrywide demographical and genealogical study of a self-standing Jewish community of some importance. Beyond that, it will demonstrate IJG's capacity to raise Jewish genealogy to new levels and provide a model for other national Jewries to conduct genealogical surveys of their own.

III. Cost-Benefit Study

As may be recalled, a decision was taken at the Institute's Annual General Meeting in January of this year to conduct an independent review (a form of Cost-Benefit analysis) into IJG's functioning as a whole, examining its programmes and activities, budget and organizational structure after more than four years of intensive activity. We were fortunate in securing the agreement of Prof. Yona Ettinger of Jerusalem, a leading Israeli physicist with a wide public-service background and a deep interest in Jewish genealogy, to conduct this study.

Prof. Ettinger submitted his report, entitled "IJG - Performance Review ", in late August. His broad assessment was that in the time period under review (January 2006 -June 2010), IJG has made remarkable progress towards the attainment of its academic goals. At the same time, he judged that its present organisational and financial structure does not ensure long-term sustainability and thus requires serious re-consideration as a matter of urgency.

In the light of these determinations and the more detailed conclusions and recommendations in the review, the Institute's Executive Committee, which met in November, decided to set up two Working Groups, one to elaborate a long-term policy plan, focussing on goals and priorities, and the other to develop a short-term fundraising strategy with a view to the next two financial years. These Working Groups will begin their work early in January. In parallel and quite separately, efforts will be made to carry out another of Prof. Ettinger's recommendations – namely, to appoint without delay an Administrative Assistant to free the Director to concentrate on his primary functions (research coordination and fundraising).

IV. Financial Situation

Thanks to the receipt of one major grant and IJG's independent fundraising efforts, the Institute survived the world financial crisis for another year. It completed the year of 2010 with total outlays in the region of \$50,000, which sufficed for the Institute's somewhat curtailed programmes and activities as well as its core budget, including salaries.

Although IJG currently has sufficient reserves in hand to embark on its 2011 activities, the longer range budgetary outlook remains extremely problematic and worrisome.

V. Fundraising (2010-11) and Research – Change of Direction

In the course of 2010, the Director made three fundraising trips to the UK, the last of which was in October. While these visits yielded some tangible results, it became clear that in present financial conditions few, if any, potential backers are willing to offer the Institute undesignated “general support funds”. On the other hand, support can possibly be gained for carefully crafted research projects, aimed at specific donors or target groups. The Institute can choose these projects according to its own priorities and “market” them for their own sakes. Moreover, on the back of them it can reasonably charge an overhead, as is customary in academic institutions, which may bring in some income towards IJG’s “core budget” (running expenses and salaries). To that end, the Institute is currently engaged in putting together half-a-dozen projects that may fit the bill.

It should be noted that if this new fundraising approach gathers momentum, it will radically affect the way the Institute has initiated and conducted its research. Until now, IJG has issued an annual “Call for Research Projects” and invited researchers to submit their own proposals for grant awards. Now, IJG would be taking projects of its own design into the market in the hope of finding donors to finance them and also of generating some funding for the Institute’s core budget.

In practice, a balance will be struck between “invited projects”, whose continuation is advocated by the Chair of the Academic Committee, and Institute generated projects designed for marketing, as it were.

All that said, the fact remains that the Institute’s funding situation remains difficult and problematic. For this reason, a Working Group has been set up, as mentioned above, to develop a coherent fundraising strategy for the next two years.

Neville Lamdan,
Jerusalem,
December 24, 2010.