

Ukraine SIG Today – the SIG’s Newsletter

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by [Ronald D. Doctor](#), Coordinator, Ukraine SIG

The IAJGS Conference in Paris last month was excellent, but it is good to be home. Now that I am recovered from 9 hours of jet lag, it's time to tell you a little about the Conference, especially about Ukraine SIG's part of it.

The sessions were well organized to minimize conflict between concurrent presentations. Technical support was excellent. Audiences were enthusiastic and inquisitive. What we lacked in the usual cast of characters attending IAJGS Conferences in the US, was more than compensated by a whole new group of European attendees. Despite occasional language communication problems, this produced a dynamic that was quite different from what we see in US and Canadian Conferences.

SUNDAY. Ukraine SIG was well represented in the Conference program. Sunday, the first day, was full of Ukraine-oriented activities. [Ariel Parkansky](#), Ukraine SIG's Web Manager, started things off on Sunday morning with a presentation about development of our website, *The revitalization of the Ukraine SIG website*. The audience was so focused on his presentation that the question and answer period afterwards ran overtime and we had to be ejected from the room to make time for the next presentation. As word has spread about how useful our new website is, other JewishGen SIGs have asked Ariel about his approach and about the code that he and his Web Team developed.

Later in the day, we had a constant stream of people visit our table at the SIG/BOF Fair ... two and a half hours of solid questioning as one person replaced another around our table. It seems that there are a lot of folks in Europe interested in our re-vitalized SIG.

After the SIG/BOF Fair, the Kremenets District Research Group (KDRG) held their annual meeting. I updated the attendees about progress in the past year and gave a glimpse of new translation projects in the coming year. KDRG now has almost 160,000 entries in the Master Name Index for towns of the Kremenets District in western Ukraine. About 75% of the 16,000 pages of revision lists for towns of the district have been translated and posted. New sets of vital records for district towns continue to arrive from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (at Hebrew University in Jerusalem). Those records are being translated and take us right up to the eve of the Shoah. KDRG now has 443 people on the e-mail distribution list. Of these 43% have contributed to the work of the group, a remarkably high percentage.

Right after the KDRG Meeting, I gave a presentation about Ukraine SIG's Ellis Island Re-indexing Project, *Town-based indexing of the Unindexed fields in the Ellis Island Database (EIDB)*. More than 20 people attended and interest in this flagship project of Ukraine SIG was high. Many people did not understand that there are three sets of fields on Passenger Manifests that were not indexed by the Ellis Island folks. This means that vital information is not

searchable or readily accessible. Attendees left with a new perspective about this project, and we signed up two more volunteers to develop projects for their towns. Currently 23 EIDB Re-indexing projects are in various stages of development.

MONDAY. Ukraine SIG's extensive contributions to the Conference continued on Monday. [Marvin Turkanis](#), Town Leader for Novograd-Volinskiy (Zvhill) was unable to attend the Conference. In his place, I attended the Novograd-Volinskiy Birds of a Feather meeting on Monday morning. I was surprised when 17 people showed up. That's a very good turnout for a BOF meeting. It turned out that many of the attendees were interested in other areas of Ukraine. Our presentations on Sunday had stimulated interest in getting new projects underway and this was reflected in the attendance and questioning at the Novograd-Volinskiy meeting.

[Iryna Serheyeva](#), head of the Judaic Department at the Vernadsky National Library in Kyiv, was our invited speaker at the Ukraine SIG Luncheon. She described the *Pinkasim* that the Vernadskiy Library holds. Thirty-seven people paid to attend the luncheon and presentation. As on Sunday, enthusiasm and interest were at high levels. The audience kept Iryna busy with questions after her presentation, until it was time for our Ukraine SIG General Meeting.

Many more people filed into the room for our Annual General Meeting. My presentation was titled, *The New Ukraine SIG ... One Year Later*. I reported on our progress toward re-shaping our SIG, and on what you can expect in the next year. My presentation will be posted on the Ukraine SIG website within the next week or two so I won't go into details here. I will post a notice when the presentation is available. Again, attendance was excellent and there were many questions that continued until we were forced out of the room to allow the next presentation in. Most of the questions concerned our website and how to use it. A section of the posted presentation is devoted to that subject.

TUESDAY. Our Ukraine SIG Open Board meeting was on Tuesday morning. Attendees included Board Members [Ariel Parkansky](#) and [Marlis Humphrey](#) plus [Jean-Pierre Stroweis](#), [Gary Stone](#), and [Zack](#).

We had a vigorous discussion about how to communicate better with our SIG Subscribers and others interested in Ukraine SIG, especially those who are not based in North America. One idea is to develop a series of *Webinars* (Web Seminars) to be presented live and then stored on our website so researchers can access them online. We'll start with the presentations that Ariel and I gave at the Conference. Other candidates for Webinars include, *How to use the new Ukraine SIG Website*, *How to create name indexes for Yizkor Book translations* and *How to re-index the Ellis Island Database*. Marlis Humphrey, Ukraine SIG's Projects Director, agreed look into Webinar technology and to find an appropriate Webinar host for us. Zack Oryan Oracz will develop formats & subjects with Marlis. **If you have any ideas for Ukraine SIG Webinar presentations, formats, and subjects, please contact [Marlis](#), [Zack](#), or [me](#).**

Gary and Zack suggested that we should increase our efforts to obtain vital records and revision lists from archives in Ukraine. We discussed strategies for achieving this, including the possibility of creating a program similar to JRI-Poland's, perhaps using some of our contacts in Israel to open discussion with Ukraine archivists. This is a continuing issue that we will pursue

more vigorously in the coming year. Zack and Jean-Pierre Stroweis will try to identify Israeli contacts who might be able to help. If you can assist on this important task, please contact either [Zack](#) or [Jean-Pierre](#).

In the meantime, we have many vital records (111 towns with microfilms of Jewish vital records) and revision lists (158 towns with microfilms) available through the LDS Family History Library. By using microfilm scanners available at many LDS Family History Centers (FHCs), we can digitize and translate images of these records. We need volunteers to order these films into a local FHC that has a microfilm scanner. Once there, the films can be reviewed to find the Jewish records for each town and the images scanned to a USB drive. Ukraine SIG will help by providing instructions for finding the Jewish records and will help to initiate translation projects. **Please contact me or Marlis Hoffman if you are interested in initiating a vital records or revision list digital imaging and translation project for your town.**

WEDNESDAY. Iryna Serheyeva gave another presentation, 'Documents in Kyiv Archives and in the Vernadskiy National Library of Ukraine Collections'. This presentation supplemented her Luncheon talk about Pinkasim. She gave examples of the many documents available in Ukraine's archival collections. As before, we had a good audience that asked many questions after Iryna's basic presentation.

All the Conference sessions, including Ukraine SIG-sponsored events were recorded and are available from the IAJGS. Ordering information is available [here](#). In addition, we will post Ariel's presentation, my presentations, and Iryna Serheyeva's presentations on our website. I'll send an announcement of availability as soon as these are posted.

OTHER SESSIONS. The Conference included many useful sessions in addition to those sponsored by Ukraine SIG. Two particularly stand out: (1) a presentation by Zvi Bernhardt of *Yad Vashem* and (2) a presentation by Patrice Bensimon and Johanna Lehr of *Yahad - in Unum*, Father Patrick Desbois' Paris-based group that is tracking and documenting the mass murder sites in Ukraine.

Zvi displayed the structure of Yad Vashem's website, discussed the resources there, and described some useful strategies for searching. If you have tried using the Yad Vashem website, you know that if your results set exceeds 1,000 records, you will get the following message:

Please note: There may be more than one record for the same victim, originating from one or more sources.

Only the first 1000 can be displayed. Please narrow/refine your query.

Until now, there was no way to retrieve records from 1,001 onward. Zvi showed how to use the new Advanced Search *update'* functions ... *updates since* and *updates until* sequentially to get the full results set. This can be tedious, but it does work.

Patrice Bensimon of Yahad - in Unum explained the types of data available in their Paris Archives and he invited conference attendees to visit the Archives while in Paris. Ariel Parkansky and I took advantage of that offer and visited on Friday, after the Conference concluded. Yahad has an enormous amount of data and information concerning the mass killings

in eastern Europe. On my visit, I obtained transcripts of their interviews with eyewitnesses from Kremenets, Vishnevets, Pochayev, and Lanovtsy. Each includes a summary of Nazi actions in the town. **These documents are in French. We need a couple of French speaking volunteers to translate them for us.** When their new website comes online around the end of August, much of this information will be available online, or by request via an online form. This will include videos of witness interviews, village by village, reports from Soviet archives (including the Soviet Extraordinary Commission), reports from German archives, and trip reports by Yahad staff.

If you have information to share with Yahad - in Unum, please write to them at contact@yahadinunum.org. Yahad archives also are available at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. While at Yahad, we discussed the possibility of a partnership between JewishGen Ukraine SIG and Yahad. Such a partnership would involve sharing data and potential new projects of mutual interest. This could be mutually beneficial and could be a model for similar partnerships with other JewishGen SIGs. We are pursuing this possibility with Yahad and with JewishGen management.

NEXT YEAR IN BOSTON. IAJGS announced their schedule of conferences for the next several years.

2013, August 4-9	Boston, Massachusetts
2014	Salt Lake City, Utah
2015	Israel
2016	Pacific NW Coast, US (city to be announced)
2017	To be announced
2018	Eastern Europe (city to be announced)

I hope to see you in Boston next year. We'll have even more to report there.

Ron

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www.jewishgen.org/Ukraine
where Jewish genealogy is personal

Researching DOCTOR (DIOKHTER), VARER, AVERBAKH, KORENFELD ... all from Kremenets, Oleksinets, Yampol, Vishnevets and KAZDOY (KOSODOY), DUBINSKI, DUBOWSKY ... all from Kiev, Uman, Odessa