



Australian Jewish Genealogical Society (Vic) Inc. Annual Report 2014

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Allan Jankie

At this time of year, it is always good to sit back and reflect on what has transpired over the past 12 months. For the AJGS (Vic), 2014 has been a year of change, and yet in some respects it has also been a year of stability.

During the year, we decided to suspend the production of our quarterly newsletter, *Jewish Genealogy Downunder*. Reality tells us that much of the information we aimed to provide in the newsletter is today so quickly and easily available via the internet that it is pointless leaving it for up to three months to tell our members. The secretary's report will discuss this decision in more detail.

In place of communicating with our members via a newsletter, we will be striving to improve the content of our website and increasing email notifications, where we feel it is necessary. In the coming months, we hope that you will visit the website and that it will become one of your favourite places to visit. My thanks to Debbie Jurblum for looking after the website, and I eagerly await the implementation of the plans that our committee has for it in the near future.

This year, our Sunday afternoon sessions at the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia have been a wonderful additional resource provided to our members. Under the excellent organisation of Liz James, we have seen many people calling in to the combined AJGS (Vic) and AJHS (Vic) resource room, seeking advice and/or information. We have also had many people using our Family History Library Affiliate status, which enables researchers to order microfilms from Salt Lake City and then view them in our resource room.

During the year, we ran a number of workshops, where we invited people to ask 'a panel of experts' about how to proceed with their research. Not only was our experienced panel able to assist but an interaction among those attending ensured that lots of helpful hints, solutions and tips were exchanged. These events proved to be extremely popular, and we will schedule more for the coming year, as well as interesting presentations from guest speakers. We will also be trial running presentations on a Sunday afternoon rather than during the traditional timeslot of an evening in midweek.

One of the least known and yet most important aspects of our role as a genealogy society are our efforts to answer the regular genealogical enquiries that come from all over the world, either directly to us or as referrals from other organisations. These requests vary dramatically from the very simple to the very complex. The depth and breadth of knowledge demonstrated by our committee members as they attempt to answer these genealogical mysteries staggers me.

Late in the year, in partnership with the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia and assisted by a kind donation from one of our members, we made the decision to subscribe to Ancestry.com. As a result, members of both the AJGS (Vic) and AJHS (Vic) (as well as Lamm library members) now have access to the vast records and information of Ancestry.com whenever they visit the library. This initiative was seen through to completion by Rene Eisner.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the entire committee: Debbie Jurblum, Lionel Sharpe, Rodney Eisfelder, Rene Eisner, Liz James, Bernie Kuran, Kaye Quittner, Ian Samuel, Bubbles Segall and Max Wald for their tireless efforts. They put in countless hours of volunteered time and our society would not function without their efforts.

Also special thanks to Leonie Fleiszig and her staff at the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia for their ongoing help and assistance. No request is ever too much for them and we greatly appreciate their support.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

by Lionel Sharpe

I wish to comment on two aspects of AJGS (Vic) activities in the past year.

Our genealogy newsletter

In February 1999, the newly established AJGS (Vic) Inc. proudly launched its own unique newsletter *Jewish Genealogy Downunder*. Until 1998, the Sydney-based AJGS newsletter *Kosher Koala* was the face of Jewish genealogy in Australia.

Victorian members wanted to develop their own identity and a newsletter was seen as a vehicle to serve this aim. In June 2009, Kaye Quittner joined me as assistant editor and the newsletter took on a new professional look and received very positive feedback from the membership.

It is with much regret that we ceased publication of *Jewish Genealogy Downunder* in 2014. This was not an easy decision for the committee, as it was largely dictated by the lack of original material and the amount of work that was required to maintain the high standard we had achieved. We had hoped to inspire our membership to publish accounts of their research, reflect on their experiences at genealogical conferences, write reviews of recent publications and promote our regular lectures and panels.

Over the years, the JewishGen website has served our members well. Alongside the outstanding academic journal *AVOTAYNU: The International Review of Jewish Genealogy*, edited by Sallyann Amdur Sack-Pikus, there is growing international membership in special interest groups. It is our belief that our members are well served utilising international resources that are easily accessible on the internet.

A few years ago, our Sydney colleagues ceased publishing *Kosher Koala* and replaced it with an e-report in 2009. They have now dropped the e-report for a much-expanded email edition of the former *Kosher Koala*. We at the AGJS (Vic) are now hoping that a report published annually on our website will serve our needs. Time will tell!

Genealogy meetings

A second issue I wish to comment on is the form and structure of future traditional meetings.

These take the form of an invited speaker, such as the visit by Pamela Weisberger, President and Research Coordinator for Geshher Galicia, who addressed a large audience at the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia on 31 March 2014 on the topic *Exploring the Archives: Unique and Unusual Resources in Galician and Polish Research*. This was a well-publicised talk which drew a large crowd.

Another example of a meeting format was a panel of members reporting on the International Conference on Jewish Genealogy which they attended in Salt Lake City, July 2014. A panel of four spoke about their impressions. This meeting followed the Annual General Meeting on 17 September 2014.

A third example was a meeting that took place twice during the year: a Q&A panel based on the ABC's popular Q&A television program. Members were asked to submit questions by email in advance of the evening. This format proved very productive, and the audience was fully engaged in cross exchanges throughout the evening.

In planning for 2015, the Committee of Management will give serious thought to holding meetings on a Sunday afternoon, as this will be appreciated by older members and save on security costs.



The AJGS (Vic) welcomed Geshher Galicia expert Pamela Weisberger to Melbourne in March 2014: from left, Debbie Jurblum, Helen Jankie, Pamela Weisberger, Liz James, Allan Jankie, Bernie Kuran and Lionel Sharpe.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The following were elected as Office Bearers and Committee of Management at the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING on 17 September 2014:

President: Allan Jankie
Vice-President: Debbie Jurblum
Secretary: Lionel Sharpe
Treasurer: Rene Eisner

Committee:
Rodney Eisfelder
Rene Eisner
Liz James
Bernie Kuran
Kaye Quittner
Ian Samuel
Bubbles Segall
Max Wald

RESOURCE ROOM AT THE LAMM LIBRARY

by Liz James

Our collection of books, microfilm and journals are housed in a resource room in the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia, 304 Hawthorn Road, Caulfield South, Victoria. The resource room is open each Sunday from 2 pm to 5 pm, and our books are included in the searchable Lamm Jewish Library online catalogue. Our extensive list of resources and books can also be found on the AJGS (Vic) website at www.ajgs-vic.org.au.

Our holdings include the combined endeavours of the AJGS (Vic) and the AJHS (Vic) in obtaining historical documents, which includes marriage as well as death and burial records of the Jewish communities in Victoria and from other states and territories around Australia. Our holdings now comprise almost 20,000 records, going back as far as the earliest days of Jewish settlement in Australia.

In 2015, the AJGS (Vic) continued its role as an affiliate of the Latter Day Saints (LDS) Family History Library, enabling the public to borrow copies of microfilms from the Family Search Catalogue and view them in our resource room at the Lamm Jewish Library of Australia.

This year, we have two computer terminals in our room that financial members can use to access the extensive worldwide genealogical databases of Ancestry.com.

AUSTRALIANS AT THE 2014 IAJGS CONFERENCE

by Debbie Jurblum

In 2014, I attended the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies (IAJGS) Conference in Salt Lake City with several other Australians, including Liz James, Bernie Kuran and Max Wald (and his wife, Peppy) from our very own AJGS (Vic) committee as well as Valerie White and Lynette Chester from Western Australia and Myra Waddell from South Australia.

There were 800 registrants from 18 different countries who came together from around the world to enjoy six inspiring days of genealogy lectures and research. The conference included 'Breakfast with the experts' and Special Interest Group Luncheons and offered more than 250 topic sessions, ranging from new features and 'how to' in Ancestry.com through to 'how to read and decipher our ancestors gravestones' and lectures on Austrian, German, Polish and English genealogy.

My favourite sessions have always been the hands-on computer workshops. This year, the DNA workshop was particularly helpful in explaining how to navigate around websites and how to maximise use of the information.

A special highlight of this year's conference was its location in Salt Lake City – a 10-minute walk from the LDS (Latter Day Saints) Family History library. When we visited the library, we were partnered with a guide who specialised in the country we were researching. The guide showed us how to navigate the indexes and then locate the microfilms relevant to our families. The information in these microfilms is not yet digitised, so you can choose to either view it at the LDS library or order a copy and have it sent to your local LDS associated library.

At the end of the conference, I toured the facilities of Ancestry.com. It was fascinating to see how they collected original documents (and preserved the originals), and then digitised the records and indexed the information, creating searchable information online to be used by genealogists the world over.

The 35th IAJGS conference will be held in Jerusalem from 6 to 10 July 2015, and I'm sure that many of our AJGS (Vic) members and our colleagues from around Australia will be among the attendees.

NEW MEMBERS

We welcomed the following members in 2014: Jack Aghion, Mary and Michael Cohen, Ron Donath, Emma Lewis, Jackie Pataki, Sophie Potasz, Tova Rubinstein, Robert Saunders, Philip Woolf, Blanche Zaitman and Rona Zinger.

VALE

We note with sadness the passing of former AJGS (Vic) committee member Dr David Cohen AM.

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2014

ABN 17 078 119 093

The accounts shown are for the financial year ending 30 June 2014.

This year, we increased our membership fees, which are now \$35 for an individual, \$50 for a family and \$18 for pensioners and concession holders. We have retained the same number of members (183 members). Fees received for the financial year totalled approximately \$4,500. Thank you to everyone who paid so promptly.

Donations have been an important factor in our ability to continue to build on our historical resources and databases. A total of \$860 was received, in addition to

specific donations of equipment and air-conditioning for our resource room at the Lamm Library. Thank you to all of our kind donors.

The main expenditure included document scanning, website maintenance, Lamm Library computer charges, printing and postage.

During the year, there were seven meetings, with the income received covering almost all of our costs. Meetings are viewed as a service to our members, and are not fundraising events.

At the start of the year, the bank balance was \$3792.49, and at 30 June 2014 it was \$5,191.07, so our net Income for the Year was almost \$1400.

Rene Eisner
Treasurer

AJGS (VIC) INC
STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE
YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2014

Membership fees	4,464.00
Function income	939.00
Newsletter sales and advertising	304.40
Bank interest received	12.01
Donations received	859.02

Gross income 6,578.43

Affiliation fees – IAJGS	92.50
Archival scanning	710.01
Association registration	51.40
Creditor (2013) paid	525.80
Equipment purchases – printer/scanner	96.00
Hall rental for meetings	1,007.60
Lamm Library computer fees	675.00
Lighting installation	275.00
PO box rental	107.00
Printing and postage	583.54
Website maintenance	1,056.00
	5,179.85

Net income for year 1,398.58
Bank Balance at 1 July 2013 3,792.49
Bank Balance AT 30 JUNE 2014 **5,191.07**

TOTAL members: 183
(52 unfinancial)