

GerSIG Business Meeting in Jerusalem on July 9, 2015

The meeting was chaired by GerSIG Director Jeanette Rosenberg, with assistance from GerSIG Director Nancy Adelson

More than 60 GerSIG members attended the meeting held during the IAJGS Conference. The agenda for the meeting was:

1. Introductions
2. Invited Guest Speaker – Dr Yochai ben Ghedalia
3. Website Update – Arthur Obermayer
4. Obermayer German Jewish History Awards Update – Arthur Obermayer
5. Discussion List & Moderation Update – John Lowens
6. Data Projects Update – Roger Lustig
7. Volunteering to Help with New GerSIG projects – Nancy Adelson
8. 1933 German Jews Database - Peter Landé
9. German National Library – Fritz Neubauer
10. GerSIG Links to DNA Testing – Rachel Unkefer & Janet Billstein Akaha
11. GerSIG in the UK – Jeanette Rosenberg
12. Various other updates & Announcements & Any Other Business

Jeanette started the meeting by sending everyone greetings from the 3 GerSIG Directors who were not present, Arthur Obermayer, John Lowens and Roger Lustig. She explained that this meeting was a report back from the GerSIG Directors on activities over the last year. She noted that GerSIG people at conference came from a wide variety of locations around the world: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Israel, Netherlands, Poland, UK and USA. There were, according to the IAJGS Conference Website at least 80 members of GerSIG present at conference this year.

Jeanette said that she was pleased that this year, our invited GerSIG Guest Speaker at conference was Dr Yochai Ben-Ghedalia Director of the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, who would be speaking at the GerSIG luncheon immediately after the SIG meeting, and with whom GerSIG hoped to engage on a shared project to preserve and index some records held at CAHJP which were not accessible other than in person by attendance at the archive. Jeanette said that the project would be announced on the GerSIG list in due course.

The next update about our website was presented on behalf of GerSIG Director Arthur Obermayer our Webmaster. The meeting heard that over the last year, the only activity on the website has been the addition of community histories, as well as the deletion of "dead" links. There are currently 1,697 community history books and/or websites listed for 998 communities.

Next, the meeting heard about the Obermayer German Jewish History Awards. The 15th series of awards were given on Monday, January 26, 2015 at the Abgeordnetenhaus in Berlin. Details of the awardees can be found at the following website: <http://www.obermayer.us/award/2015/2015.htm> . The nomination period for the 2016 award is now open and will close on September 21, 2015. The awards 2016 will be given at the Abgeordnetenhaus von Berlin on Monday, January 25,

2016, at 6:00 pm. Further details on how to nominate someone for an award can be read here: <http://www.obermayer.us/award/nominate.htm>

The next report back came from John Lowens, our GerSIG Moderator who notes that the GerSIG Member count was 2,297 on June 10, 2015. Though, this was not a true reflection of those that were active on the list, as many list members simply deleted messages. John strongly urges new subscribers to send "HELLO" or "INTRO" emails to introduce themselves & their research interests to the rest of the group, because many excellent breakthroughs have resulted from new subscriber "INTRO" emails. Jeanette reminded people present who were not already members to join our email list via this page on the JewishGen site http://www.jewishgen.org/ListManager/members_add.asp (you need to be logged in to JewishGen first!)

We are particularly keen for people to share, by email, lists of the names and places they are researching if they have not done so. In these and all messages to our list, posters are urged to please keep the last names in UPPER CASE and the places in lower case text, and if possible say when your family lived there. We also appreciate SITE CITE and BOOK CITE and similar messages. We especially appreciate "success stories" and "thank you" messages from those whom the Forum has helped. John's report back noted that, over the last year, a significant and growing number of list messages mention data from and member participation in other on-line sources - Ancestry, Geni, etc. and that many of the List messages are now View-mate translation requests.

As our Moderator, John welcomes any thoughts or comments about our discussion list. He notes that not all comments and suggestions can be posted to the list but they are of interest to the Moderator and are much appreciated. "As GerSIG's customer service representative, I am always happy to try to help members solve GerSIG and JewishGen technical problems".

The next report came from Roger Lustig, GerSIG Research Director. His report noted the Hessen Gatermann Records Phase 1 was now complete and available online. It had been announced at the JewishGen update during this conference and had added 18,499 additional 19th- and 20th-century Jewish vital records. He had written in detail to the GerSIG list about the update in early July and the full detail can be found in the GerSIG Discussion List Archives. Roger sends a very big thank you to the all the volunteer transcribers. He will be announcing new projects where volunteer help was needed very shortly. The GerSIG Directors are interested in your views about what records you want us to work on. Please contact Roger with any suggestions that you might have.

Nancy Adelson, GerSIG's Volunteer Coordinator circulated sheets among those people present at the meeting, encouraging people to sign up to volunteer to help with SIG projects. She will liaise with Roger Lustig to allocate volunteers to projects, based on preference and experience. Nancy thanked GerSIG members for their generosity of time allocated to projects. Jeanette added that it was possible to contribute to transcribing without having deep knowledge of German or German script.

The next update was from Peter Landé about the two databases he had been working on, 1933 German Jews Database. This database includes 46,739 records from 262 towns, see <http://stevemorse.org/germanjews/germanjews.html> . The data would soon also be searchable from the JewishGen website via the Germany database, and also a database of certain German Jewish Deaths from 1941-43 compiled using the database at <http://robertbachara.com/bazaaptest> . The database comprises Western Poland & German Jews who perished in 1941-43 in their cities of residence – i.e. they were people who were not deported. Peter had also compiled a small database of Kinder from the Kindertransport.

Next, Fritz Neubauer gave an update on his ongoing correspondence with the German National Library, who had removed access to Exilpresse Digital. He noted that Aufbau was now online via the Leo Baeck Institute in New York. He also spoke about the removal of the Minden Memorial Book, which will now be put up again.

After this, Jeanette told those present at the meeting that Find My Past had placed online a collection of records relating to the Kindertransport, based on records held at the UK National Archives. Further detail could be read here:

<http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-Records/kindertransport> and <http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-Records/kindertransport-browse>

At this point, Jeanette thanked all donors to the GerSIG General Fund and the Speaker Bureau. The former allows us to work on projects to bring records online, and the latter allows us to bring interesting speakers to the IAJGS Conference each year. The GerSIG Directors are very grateful to everyone who has donated over the last year and GerSIG members were encouraged to continue to donate on the following page: http://www.jewishgen.org/JewishGen-erosity/v_projectslist.asp?project_cat=13

Next, Jeanette paid tribute to GerSIG member Zimmt, (1921-2014) Before GerSIG or JewishGen existed, Werner created a massive family tree. His research enabled JewishGen to bring many Scheuer and Barth cousins together and continue our family history. He was a mentor, teacher and friend and lived a long, interesting life.

After that, the meeting heard from Rachel Unkefer who spoke very briefly about DNA projects of interest to many of us. The Jews of Frankfurt project <http://jewsoffrankfurt.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/jewsoffrankfurt> and the WIRTH project and the BACHRACH project. More details are available from Rachel and Janet Billstein Akaha.

Next item was from Jeanette about GerSIG's UK German group, which is a SIG of the JGS from Great Britain. The meeting hear how GerSIG members who wish can contact Jeanette to get put on her mailing list for any handouts from the UK-based German-Jewish group.

Finally, Jeanette mentioned the proposals from several years back to bring back the Stammbaum Journal (previous journals are available online here <http://www.lbi.org/publications/lbi-periodicals/stammbaum/>) we noted how since going public with our plans, Avotaynu had been including more German-Jewish interest articles, and that maybe that and Avotaynu online see

<http://www.avotaynuonline.com/> and <http://www.avotaynu.com/AvotaynuOnline.html> which was free to subscribe to were more geared up to publishing. Either way, we had not received enough material to warrant publishing. The situation would be kept under review.

Following the presentations, the floor was opened to questions. Jeanette asked members in Israel who can visit archives to identify themselves to GerSIG. Rabbi David Shapiro who lives in Jerusalem said that he was able to read old Hebrew German records and provide information to members. Paul Cheifitz also volunteered to help with records lookups. Someone else asked would the website change soon. Jeanette responded that there were no immediate plans at the moment.

Those present were encouraged to contact the GerSIG Directors with questions, thoughts and ideas, our contact details are:

Volunteer Coordinator - Nancy Adelson - nancyadelson@comcast.net
Moderator - John Lowens - GerSIGmod@gmail.com
Research Coordinator - Roger Lustig - GerSIG.Research@verizon.net
Webmaster & Awards - Arthur Obermayer - obermayer@alum.mit.edu
Conference Coordinator - Jeanette Rosenberg - jeanette.r.rosenberg@googlemail.com

On behalf of all of the GerSIG Directors, Jeanette thanked people for attending the meeting and looked forward to seeing everyone again at our GerSIG business meeting in Seattle in August 2016.

Jeanette Rosenberg
Jerusalem
July 2015