What's New in JRI–Poland?

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In February 2013, Jewish Records Indexing - Poland and the Polish State Archives (PSA) signed an agreement marking a new phase of cooperation that is of great significance to those searching their Jewish roots in Poland. The agreement has enabled JRI-Poland to rapidly expand its activities in Poland and its online database of indices.

In an announcement reflecting the significance of these records and their importance to family historians, the PSA launched a massive effort to digitize all vital records in their more than 30 Regional Archives and to make them available - free - on their National Digital Archives and Regional Archive websites.

JRI-Poland is serving the research community by linking search results to the PSA's digital images of the Jewish records. As of June 2016, more than two million entries have been linked to digital images of records, pages near the digital image, or folders holding the digital image.

"Phase 3" of JRI-Poland

Since its founding in 1995, there have been two phases in the activity of Jewish Records Indexing – Poland, starting with "Phase 1", the initial mission of creating basic indices of records microfilmed by the LDS, and then "Phase 2," the indexing of later years of records in Polish Archives not filmed by the LDS. Changes in Polish archival policies and privacy laws in recent years have resulted in dramatic new opportunities for researchers tracing Jewish roots in Poland that would have been unthinkable just a few short years ago. This led to the launch of Phase 3 at the conference in Jerusalem in July 2015.

"Phase 3" has two components made possible by:
1. The availability of digital images – facilitating more detailed extraction of the five million records currently in the JRI-Poland database as well as those to be added in future.

Online images are making it possible to both expedite linking of search results to images and facilitate the expansion of basic indices - currently in the database - to more detailed extracts. Where possible, future data entry will include more detailed extracts of records. When town-linked images are available, search results will direct you to "view image." The invaluable role of volunteer Archive Coordinators and Town Leaders in this process will be explained in detail.

2. New Polish laws for the protection of personal data (as of March 1, 2015) have enabled JRI-Poland to access/scan/extract marriage and death records up to 1935 (more than 80-years old) in Civil Records Offices (USCs) in Poland. The process to undertake this activity and the results to date will be reviewed.

These changes will have a significant impact on both the JRI-Poland organization and the researcher community.

Jewish Records of Poland

A remarkable number of Jewish records of Poland have survived in branches of the Polish State Archives (PSA), town civil records offices (Urząd Stanu Cywilnego), municipal offices and museums. Vital records of Congress Poland towns from 1808 to 1860/1890, have been microfilmed and are accessible in Family History Centers of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) - Mormons. Records up to ca. 1915 are stored in the PSA. For current information on records for your town, write to questions@jri-poland.org.

Jewish Records Indexing - Poland (JRI-Poland) is creating searchable on-line indices/extracts of Jewish records from current and former territories of Poland. Where such records are available, they may include towns that are now part of Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus.

Founded 20 years ago, the project was an outgrowth of Stanley Diamond's need for broad-based access to the Jewish vital records of the former Łomża Gubernia for genetic research purposes. Steven Zedeck of Atlanta and Michael Tobias of Glasgow, Scotland used their technical skills to bring the project to life. Diamond became Executive Director in January 1997. JRI-Poland is managed by a board of volunteers.

JRI-Poland Record Sources

The LDS films contain approximately two million records. In addition, there are millions of un-filmed records in branches of the Polish State Archives for the 40 to 50 years prior to 1916, when many of our grandparents and great-grandparents lived in Poland. Only indices/extracts to birth records more than 100 years old, and marriage and death records more than 80 years old may be made available online. Records less than 100 years old are typically located in town civil records offices (Urząd Stanu Cywilnego).

To supplement vital records or provide other sources for towns whose records may not have survived, JRI-Poland includes additional types of records, principally among which are Books of Residents (house-by-house censuses documenting all occupants) and census records. Books of Residents and census records from a number of towns have been scanned in the past few years and are available for data entry.

Other sources in the database include WWI military casualty records, army draft lists, indices to burials in cemeteries and gravestone files, Polish passports, ghetto death records, birth, marriage and death notices in newspapers in Poland and court and legal announcements in official newspapers (Monitor Polski).

In 2014, Jewish Records Indexing – Poland and the Foundation for Documentation of Jewish Cemeteries (The database of the Jewish Cemeteries in Poland) signed a collaborative agreement to enable multiple-field searches of the JRI-Poland database to display links to transcriptions and photographs of gravestones in more than 80 cemeteries in towns in Poland. More than 100,000 graves are now in the Foundation database including almost 60,000 in the Okopowa Street Cemetery in Warsaw, the largest in Poland.

The JRI-Poland database includes record entries from more than 550 towns. However, there are certain towns for which records have been indexed, but until the cost of the indexing has been covered through researcher donations, the data cannot be added to the searchable database. Excel files with this data are available to Qualified Contributors to individual projects. The JRI-Poland "NameFinder" Excel Add-In simplifies searching Excel data files.

The more liberal Polish privacy laws introduced in 2015 have made it possible to scan and extract marriage and death records in Civil Records Offices (USCs) up to 1935. JRI-Poland has seized this opportunity through an aggressive campaign to access these records in more than 100 towns. Excel files with this data are also available to Qualified Contributors to town projects.

Medical/Genetic Applications

JRI-Poland has been recognized by the medical and scientific community because of the potential benefit of the database for families trying to trace their medical histories, particularly those at increased risk for hereditary conditions and diseases. As a result of statistical analyses indicating a high incidence of medical and genetic abnormalities in individuals of Polish - Jewish descent, JRI-Poland PSA and USC data can assist individuals who may need answers to medical-related questions or require bone marrow or other transplants for life-saving procedures. In this regard, JRI-Poland has received commendations from the Gift of Life Foundation and the National Marrow Donor Program. This data also has value to the scientific community to prevent the spread of known genetic traits and life-threatening diseases.

Building the Database of Jewish Records Indexing - Poland

1. Indexing of records on microfilm (or in digital images online).

There are more than two million vital records in the LDS microfilms of Jewish registers. More than half have been indexed/extracted and many more are in progress. As part of the PSA scanning initiative, a large percentage of records once only accessible on microfilm, can now be viewed online.

Records from many towns have yet to be indexed/extracted for which volunteers are needed. Data entry is typically done by a single dedicated volunteer or groups of volunteers with a common interest in an ancestral town or area. "Contact us" notations on The JRI-Poland "Your Town" pages indicate which years/types have not yet been indexed/extracted and for which volunteers are needed.

Where they are available on microfilm or online, Cyrillic script entries (from the post-1867 Russian years' registers) are in the main transliterated by professionals whose work is funded by contributions from both individuals and groups of genealogists around the world.

2. Records in the Polish State Archives – not on microfilm

Indexing/extraction of pre-1907 records has been generally completed for virtually all branches of the Archives with the exception of those in the former Germanic areas. For many towns, records up to 1914/1915 can now be searched online.

The JRI-Poland database includes extracts for more than one million vital records from 93 towns in the East Galician area (now part of Ukraine) in the AGAD Archives (The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw). AGAD holds many of the records for the areas of the former Lwów, Stanisławów, and Tarnopol voivodships (now in Ukraine). The registers are mainly for the period from 1877-1915, when these areas were a part of the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia.

Special Contributors to the Jewish Records Indexing - Poland Database

Douglas Goldman Jewish Genealogy Center, Beit Hatfutsot, Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, Tel Aviv houses a large collection of LDS microfilms. Volunteers have created extracts of vital records of Będzin, Białystok, Ciepelów, Gniewoszow, Golub-Dobrzyń, Góra Kalwaria, Kozienice, Kraków, Łowicz, Plońsk, Radom, Rawa Maz., Sandomierz, Siedlce, Sobków, Sulmierzyce, Szrensk, Tarnów, Warszawa, Włoszczowa, Wodzisław, Wolbórz and Zakroczym. Other towns are underway.

Kielce-Radom Special Interest Group: Extracts of Jewish vital records for a number of towns have been published in the Kielce-Radom SIG Journal. All editions of the Journal have now been added to the JRI-Poland website in searchable PDF files. The data is being integrated into the searchable JRI-Poland database.

[Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw (JHI):](link) Utilizing significant grant funds from the Jewish Genealogical Society, Inc (New York), JRI-Poland indexed genealogical-related holdings at the JHI. These include indices to post-1877 Krakow banns and marriage records, thousands of deaths in the Warsaw Ghetto, the Biała Podlaska 1939 Census, and Aliyah Passport file.

Andrychow, Bytom, Bielsko-Biala, Czeladż-Będzin, Kraków, Łódż, Opole, Oswiecim and Warszawa, Cemeteries: JRI-Poland has incorporated the indices to these burials in the JRI-Poland database. These are in addition to the Foundation for Documentation of Jewish Cemeteries graves searchable by the JRI-Poland website.

JRI-Poland Web Site

The web site contains a wealth of information for both beginners and experienced researchers such as Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), "Your Town" pages, database contents, surname lists, detailed search instructions, status of projects, etc. A Research Guide is available on the web site in English, French, Hebrew, Polish, Russian and Spanish. The home page www.jri-poland.org is the starting point for all activities.

The Jewish Records Indexing - Poland 'Discussion Group'

Discussion Group subscribers share information and participate in discussions relating to records as well as receive updates on the database contents and interrelated matters. To subscribe, go to the "About Us" link on the JRI-Poland home page. jri-poland.org/join.htm

Jewish Records Indexing - Poland; a shared vision

The JRI-Poland project is built on a shared vision and partnering with individuals, archives, and independent organizations around the world. Every individual with an interest in the Jewish records of Poland can play a part by [volunteering](link) and/or [supporting](link) record indexing.

While the JRI-Poland database, website and discussion group are hosted by JewishGen, JRI-Poland administration, operations and fundraising are entirely separate.

To best serve those researching their Jewish roots in Poland, JRI-Poland also shares its unique data with JewishGen. While much of JRI-Poland's data can be accessed via the JewishGen All-Poland database, it is important to note that donations to JewishGen do not fund JRI-Poland's research and growth; only donations to JRI-Poland can accomplish this, and only searches on the JRI-Poland ["Search Our Database"](link) page provide free multiple-field searches.

JRI-Poland fundraising is "shtetl-specific" so that you can direct your donations to support indexing records for your town or towns and thus directly further the research of towns specific to their interest.

JRI-Poland is an independent non-profit tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. Canadian contributors making donations of no less than C$1000 are also eligible to receive tax receipts.

JRI-Poland - Winner of the 2014 IAJGS
"Award for Outstanding Contribution to Jewish Genealogy via the Internet"
www.jri-poland.org