

ORIGINS OF THE LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH
STUDIES ASSOCIATION

1982-1995

Judith Laikin Elkin
Founding President

BIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Judith Laikin Elkin is the author of *The Jews of Latin America*, now in its 3rd edition. She co-edited *The Jewish Presence in Latin America* with Gilbert W. Merx; and *Latin American Jewish Studies: An Annotated Guide to the Resources* with Analya Sater. In addition to numerous articles and book reviews, she founded and edited the LAJSA Newsletter for eighteen years.

Prior to entering the field of Latin American Jewish Studies, Elkin served as a United States Foreign Service Officer, assigned to India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. Her memoir of those years was published as *Krishna Smiled: Assignment in South Asia* (Wayne State University Press). On return to the US, she became a syndicated columnist for the Detroit *Free Press* and Toledo *Blade*, before taking faculty positions at Wayne State University, Ohio State University, and Albion College. During the Columbus Quincentenary Year, she directed a yearlong series of conferences on *Jews and the Encounter with the New World*, based at the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Dr. Elkin has been awarded fellowships by the American Association of University Women, Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, American Jewish Archives, John Carter Brown Library, and the Fulbright Association.

Her most recent book, *Walking Made my Path*, recreates her experiences as a novice historian in Latin America.

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FOREWORD

When LAJSA's governing board asked me to compose a history of the association's founding, I soon realized that it would be impossible for me to write a conventional third-person narrative. During the 13 years in which I led LAJSA, it evolved from a personal voyage of exploration to a worldwide network connecting hundreds of persons with similar interests residing in tens of countries. LAJSA's story and my own are so tightly bound together that this account of LAJSA's origins is both history and memoir.

JLE

Ann Arbor, March 2016

I wish to express my appreciation to Naomi Lindstrom and Saúl Sosnowski, who read portions of this history critically, and to Eva Mooney, who copyedited.

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Chapter 1

To Unite in Common

To unite in common persons having an interest in Latin American Jewish Studies, and to increase the store of knowledge concerning this subject; and to that end to encourage scholarship, disseminate information concerning research opportunities, organize conferences and consultations, publish research findings, and maintain an information network among members.

This statement presents the rationale invoked for incorporating the Latin American Jewish Studies Association (LAJSA) under laws of the State of Michigan, USA, in April 1982. Formation of LAJSA had been approved the preceding month by an ad hoc group of interested persons who met in Washington D.C. during intervals of the national conference of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA). Eight months later, over Halloween weekend of October 30 – November 1, 1982, LAJSA held its first research conference.

The speed with which the association came together and began building a professional identity speaks to the pressures that had been building among scholars for recognition of our work on this subject. Latin American Jewish studies were at the time a more or less private avocation, unrecognized by universities or publishers, or by existing organizations such as LASA. Without such recognition, scholars lacked an intellectual community within which ideas could be circulated and tested; institutional support was not forthcoming; and there existed no platform from which to present scholarly work.

The original members of LAJSA were brought together by correspondence that I initiated with persons I identified in the course of my

own research as having a scholarly or a practical interest in Latin American Jews. Circulating a questionnaire among them, I was encouraged by the return of 1 in 3 for a total of 40 positive responses from interested persons in 7 countries. Taking advantage of the opportunity presented by a joint meeting of LASA with the Midwest Association of Latin Americanists, I organized a round table at which those who were available to attend discussed possibilities for creating a professional network around our shared interest.

That meeting was announced in vol.1 no.1 of the Latin American Jewish Studies Newsletter, a newly fashioned publication of five mimeographed pages, which I produced in August 1980 during a fellowship that had been awarded to me by the American Jewish Archives. Distributing the Newsletter was an innovative move for AJA as well as for me, as their interests at that time focused solely on the northern half of the western hemisphere. In the course of my stay in Cincinnati, I wrote and edited an AJA publication containing an introduction to this new intellectual field, a survey of published literature, an essay on future research needs and the newly created directory of scholars. This publication was mailed gratis to all who requested it, together with the first issue of the Newsletter.

The LAJS project (as yet unnamed) drew the attention of Michael A. Meyer of Hebrew Union College, at the time president of the Association for Jewish Studies, who suggested that I organize a panel on Latin American Jewry to be presented at the next AJS conference, scheduled for Boston in December 1980.

Considerable correspondence followed as I sought out scholars willing and able to participate, as well as funds or private housing for them in Boston as necessary. In the end, a highly qualified trio of scholars

presented their work at AJS. They included Victor Mirelman, whose doctoral dissertation provided a base point for LAJS; Saúl Sosnowski, whose publications had already made their mark in literary criticism; and Henrique Rattner of the Fundação Getúlio Vargas, whose sociological study of the Jews of São Paulo had just been published. Abe Peck, AJA's associate director, attended our panel, which I moderated. But alas, none of the members of the Association for Jewish Studies—at that date highly Euro-centered—were attracted to our subject, and none attended.

Encouragement came from the Latin Americanist side when William Glade, Director of the Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, wrote me suggesting that we consider establishing a presence within LASA. Acting on this suggestion, which was discussed at our Bloomington conclave, a panel was assembled consisting of Judith Friedlander, Robert Levine, Luz María Martínez Montiel and myself, for a discussion of “The Function of Jewishness in Mexican and Brazilian Ideology.”

The rejection of this panel by the organizers of the LASA conference was the proximate cause for formation of LAJSA. This was only the latest in a series of rejections by scholarly organizations of papers on the Jews of Latin America. It came as the climax to a series of rebuffs that I—and no doubt others-- had encountered in seeking support for my doctoral dissertation on the subject. The marginalization of Jews as a cultural, political, and economic presence within Latin American societies, and the corresponding invisibility of research into the reality—as opposed to the mythology—of the Jewish presence there, provided the spur for organizing LAJSA as a separate, freestanding association.

The academic standards that would characterize LAJSA in the coming years were set by founders of the association. Original officers included Robert M. Levine (University of Miami), vice-president and secretary; Bernard D. Ansel (State University College at Buffalo), treasurer; board members Saúl Sosnowski (University of Maryland), Richard D. Woods (Trinity University), Eugene Sofer (US House Budget Committee), and myself as president. The value of association was confirmed at the first meeting, as negotiations with the new director of LASA (Richard Sinkin) led to the elimination of discrimination against LAJ themes at subsequent LASA conferences.

The American Jewish Archives was the first institution to activate an interest in Latin American Jewish studies. Previously dedicated to the Northern Americas only, the AJA invited me on completion of my fellowship to edit an issue of its journal. Dedicated to research on the Americas of the South, the special issue appeared in Fall 1982 with articles by Stanley M. Hordes, Stephen A. Sadow, Nora Glickman, Víctor Mirelman, Isaac Goldemberg, and Rosa R Krausz, The dean of American Jewish studies, Jacob Rader Marcus, and Abraham J. Peck, associate director of the Archives, also invited LAJSA to hold its first research conference at the Archives, located on the campus of Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio.

By the time LAJSA met at the AJA, 161 persons from 17 countries had subscribed to the new association. Ninety-eight of these resided in the United States, 24 in Israel, 10 in Mexico, 7 in Brazil, 6 in Argentina; 1 or 2 persons each in France, Netherlands, Peru, United Kingdom, Austria, Chile, Curacao, Ecuador, Panama, Surinam, US Virgin Islands, and Uruguay. About two-thirds of respondents were academics, of whom 37 were

historians. Sociologists and anthropologists numbered the same as teachers of Spanish and Portuguese language and literature; only 2 identified themselves as teachers of Hebrew and Yiddish. Economics, demography, geography, the law, and psychology were also represented.

Non-academics also figured among the original members of LAJSA, including 11 officers of Jewish social agencies and 5 Israeli diplomats with experience in Latin America. Journalists, editors and publishers, filmmakers, businessmen, physicians and lawyers were also counted among those present. The several rabbis who joined were either on college faculties or were officials of Jewish communal agencies who were motivated by professional, rather than strictly religious interests. LAJSA began its existence as a secular, quasi-academic, non-confessional organization. No attempt was made to discern whether a member was approaching the field from a “Jewish” or a “Latin American” perspective; blending the two was actually one of the purposes of the association. Within a year, with dues set at \$10 for individuals, \$20 for organizations, the network grew to two hundred and twenty-five.

Among the greatest assets to LAJSA were librarians, archivists and bibliographers. At the time, the few existing studies of Jewish life and communities were not indexed in Latin American references or available in libraries that specialized in Latin American. The history of Jewish life on the continent largely remained the sphere of amateur chroniclers of community life. Now, trained professionals focused their analytic skills on the resources available in both Jewish and Latin American domains. Four of these scholars, Woods, Thomas Niehaus, Arnona Rudavsky and María Hernández-Lehmann attended the conference and provided expanded versions of their papers for publication. (*Resources for Latin American Jewish Studies*, ed.

Judith Laikin Elkin, Ann Arbor, 1984) This publication, optimistically designated LAJSA publication #1, provides an essential bibliographic base for research. It was published with the assistance of the American Jewish Committee, which had been represented at the conference by Jacobo Kovadloff, director of the AJC's Latin American Section.

Haim Avni, director of Latin American studies at the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Judaism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, also attended the Cincinnati conference. There he described archival collections in Israel, which include documents retrieved from Latin American sites and brought to Jerusalem for preservation and as yet scarcely catalogued. His presence linked American and Israeli scholars and scholarship; such intercontinental relationships were to become an important element in LAJSA.

The conference also was the venue for showing "Batei Hayyim: Houses of the Living," a photographic tour of Jewish cemeteries in Cuba and Brazil, conducted by filmographer Levine. The video brought out subtle connections between Jewish and Latin cultural practices and was a fitting treat considering that the date was in fact el Día de los Muertos.

LAJSA's first research conference at the Archives attracted the attention of several other institutions that would be important to the future of LAJSA. Following a number of conversations between myself and Israel Singer and Sidney Gruber of the World Jewish Congress, that organization arranged for Natan Lerner, director of its Israel office, to attend the Cincinnati conference. Subsequently, WJC underwrote 3 years of start-up costs of the new association.

Encouragement came from a number of other quarters. The Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture responded favorably to my application for a

fellowship in support of my efforts in organizing LAJSA. Several senior scholars, including Charles Gibson and Woodrow Borah, as well as Dolores Moyano Martin, Editor of the Handbook of Latin American Studies, and William Carter, Chief of the Hispanic Division, both of the Library of Congress, offered me moral encouragement. At the most practical level of support, Gil Merx, director of the Latin American Institute at the University of Mexico, invited LAJSA to collaborate on a conference in Albuquerque on the Jews of Latin America. To establish contact, he dispatched his colleague Karen Bracken to attend the Cincinnati conference.

Funds started coming in, along with the realization that more would be needed. It became urgent to acquire a fiscal agent. LAJSA had no office or financial structure. Without any formalities, I was soliciting and receiving dues, and paying LAJSA expenses through a bank account I opened in LAJSA's name. Meanwhile, I had been discussing my organizing activities with Jon Fuller, president of the Great Lakes Colleges Association, where I was employed part-time as faculty program officer. Fuller, an innovator in higher education, offered me free use of office facilities and also offered to act as LAJSA's fiscal agent.

While I was still trying to finalize the program for the Cincinnati conference, serendipity extended an invitation to me to attend a seminar on teaching Jewish studies at the university level, to be held in Jerusalem during June-July 1982. The seminar would take place just three months before LAJSA's own conference. But the invitation, fully funded, was too tempting to resist. While I had earned a Ph.D. in Latin American History at the University of Michigan, my Jewish education dated back to childhood in the communally funded Farband Folk Shule. The Jerusalem seminar promised

to set my education into a universal context and provide a conceptual format for integrating LAJ studies into university curricula.

With as profound a curriculum as for any course taught at Hebrew University, the Jerusalem seminar presented an intellectual framework for teaching Jewish studies. The seminar also offered a forum where scholars from multiple countries could exchange insights surrounding their work and begin weaving professional networks.

Of greater historic import, Israel invaded Lebanon on 6 June, 1982. The seminar opened later that month as scheduled under conditions that, as I wrote in my diary, “you wouldn’t know there was a war going on if you didn’t know there was a war going on.” It was the period of the “good fence,” and cars with Lebanese license plates were ferrying families around Jerusalem on sightseeing tours. Courtesy was being extended by drivers stuck in multinational traffic jams on Jaffa Road. The seminar was instructive on many levels.

My stay in Jerusalem allowed for an encounter with the Asociación Israelí de Investigadores del Judaísmo Latinoamericano - AMILAT. This scholarly cooperative was formed by some nine scholars who were brought together by their studies at the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Judaism at Hebrew University. Most were students of Haim Avni, and many had emigrated from Latin America to Israel—i.e., actual Latin American Jews. AMILAT conformed to Israeli culture by operating as a cooperative. In addition to life experiences, they shared research, editorial responsibilities, and financial opportunities. Several members had already published significant work in Hebrew and Spanish.

LAJSA, on the other hand, was comprised of over 200 academics and non-academics professionally involved with either Latin American or Judaic

studies, but just beginning to conceptualize a hybrid entity to be known as Latin American Jewish studies. LAJSA and AMILAT, so different in origin and organizational style, had substantive interests in common and much to offer one another.

AMILAT invited me to a get-acquainted evening meeting at the home of Efraim Zadoff, where I met Israelis Margalit Bejarano, Silvia Schenkolewski, Moshe Nes-El, and others who were to become important in the evolution of LAJSA activities. The English fluency of some members compensated for my own hesitant ventures into Hebrew. Hours of discussion brought out the lack of information on both sides of the turning globe: What research is being carried out in Israel, the US, elsewhere? Where are the important archives? Is anyone actually teaching LAJ studies? Are syllabi available? How can we arrange for translation? Are there possibilities for faculty exchange? How can Israelis participate in conferences abroad? Can the Newsletter be used to exchange information on these subjects?

Thanking AMILAT for the warm welcome, I said that the Newsletter was open to contributions from all members. I expected answers to some of our questions to emerge from the presentations projected for Cincinnati. Those who put their names and addresses forward could be included in the next directory and would begin to receive the Newsletter. On a broader scale, we needed to work on basic issues: the absence of communication between Latin Americanists and Judaic studies scholars; a perceived lack of people qualified to tackle both sides of the equation; and the lack of standing for the new field of LAJS. Questions involving international monetary exchange were declared by me to be beyond my expertise.

To keep conferences and communications going, two things were required, I said: membership and funds. No voluntary association could last

without committed members willing to pay a share of costs. AMILAT, honoring their own history, responded that, if a link were to be forged, they would want to join LAJSA the same way they were organized—as a coop. The question of group membership was left for future determination.

Taking advantage of the momentum generated in Jerusalem, and a month later at the AJA-sponsored conference in Cincinnati, I announced through the Newsletter that there would be a general meeting, open to all interested persons, during the LASA conference in Mexico City in September 1983. I had no idea who, if anyone, would turn up.

Fourteen people attended this meeting, including Mexican scholars who were to become central to development of the field. Here, and later at the home of Shoshana Ralsky de Cimet, I met Judit Bokser de Liwerant, Alicia Gojman de Backal, Ana Portnoy de Berner, and a dozen more scholars who were to go on to make their names in Latin American Jewish Studies and to turn LAJSA into the intellectual force it became.

At these initial meetings several questions were raised about the character of our new association: should LAJSA attempt to arrange conferences on its own, or look for sponsors among already established organizations? Should we sponsor only proposals by LAJSA members? Should panels sponsored by LAJSA include only LAJSA members, or others as well? Those present agreed that LAJSA members should offer a relevant topic for inclusion in the 1985 LASA conference; Edy Kaufman offered to organize a panel on relations between Israel and Mexico. But overarching questions regarding the criteria for membership were left for future events to resolve.

I now had a notebook full of names and ideas that would require an expanded version of the Newsletter to describe and disseminate, and more

than one hundred percent of my working time. Finances would be more problematic than ever: each new member, whether in the US, Israel, Mexico or elsewhere in Latin America, increased the intellectual weight of the association while adding to its expenses. Every conference that built upon and expanded the academic presence of LAJ studies would also empty the LAJSA bank account. There was no doubt in my mind that it was better to bring in new members while looking for additional funds, rather than maintain an inflexible position on dues payment at the cost of excluding potential members. I continued mailing the Newsletter and conference invitations to potentially interested parties whether or not they paid dues, in the hope of maintaining the inquirer's interest and generating public visibility for the field.

March 12, 2016

Chapter 2

Albuquerque - LAJSA II

Critical to the acceptance of Latin American Jewish Studies as a valid field of study was the intervention of Gil Merkx, director of the Latin American Institute of the University of New Mexico and editor of the *Hispanic American Historical Review*. Merkx's invitation to LAJSA to co-sponsor a research conference confirmed the academic validity of Latin American Jewish studies, and identified LAJSA as a credible sponsor of its introduction into academia.

"The Jewish Experience in Latin America," planned for September 1983, did not take place until March 1984. The new date posed fewer problems with academic calendars in the United States (start of fall semester), Latin America (with a variety of starting dates) and Israel (religious holidays). This was our introduction to the complexity of organizing a tri-continental gathering.

Unmentioned in reporting the change of date was the kerfuffle initiated by the London office of the World Jewish Congress, known as the Institute for Jewish Affairs, whose director offered Merkx the sum of \$10,000 in support of the conference. A substantial sum at that date, the offer meant that the conference could be carried off in style.

Until, that is, IJA added the condition that LAJSA and its president should have no role in the planning or execution of the conference.

Months of negotiation ensued. Considering the elephant-and-ant partnership between the Latin American Institute and LAJSA, and with a \$10,000 piñata hanging overhead, I feared for the outcome. But Merkx, taken aback by the London director's peremptory demands, chose to retain

control of his project. Spurning the donation, he dropped the proposed partnership with IJA and confirmed the original relationship with LAJSA. Ultimately, the conference was mounted with the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Mellon Foundation and the American Jewish Congress, with Haim Avni and myself enlisted as consultants.

At this time, popular interest in Latin America had been aroused by publication of Jacobo Timerman's memoir of the Argentine repression, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number*, with its graphic presentation of institutionalized anti-Semitism. Reflecting the demographics of the American Southwest and its Hispanic heritage, believed by many to include a marrano presence, the conference was heavily attended by members of the public with special attention drawn to a panel discussion of Argentine events among Merckx, Avni, Elkin, Sosnowski and Mirelman.

The value of the Albuquerque conference went beyond its relevance to current events. The sixteen papers that were presented spanned a wide range of topics; some of these proved basic to development of the field. Sergio DellaPergola's survey of population trends, previously available only in Hebrew, opened a view deep inside the "black hole" of LAJ demographics. Daniel Levy erased outdated discussions of Jewish elementary education with a global analysis as applied to Latin America. Martínez Montiel created an entry point for the inclusion of Jewish populations when considering the diverse ethnicities of Mexico. Sociologist Henrique (Haim) Rattner demonstrated the sophisticated research being carried out in Brazil. Issues of Jewish identity were discussed by Leonardo Senkman, who was to become one of the leading thinkers on this subject. Carlos Waisman provided a global perspective on the sociology of Jewish communities in the southern cone—a reminder of cultural similarities and

differences within that region. The full roster of presentations was published in the Newsletter of August 1984; edited papers were published three years later as Elkin and Merx, eds., *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*. (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

General interest in the Timerman affair may account for the fact that the conference was covered by the New York Times, the local press, and the Jewish press around the world by way of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. When I was interviewed over Montevideo radio, a month later, articles by LAJSA members Harriet Rochlin and by Egon Friedler provided the basis for the interviewer's questions.

No publication could reproduce the air of exhilaration that pervaded the University's conference rooms, dining halls, and hallways as colleagues hitherto known to one another only through their writings met face to face. English, Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, flew through lecture halls without benefit of earphones or interpretation to transmit through them. For a time, beleaguered in the center of the rostrum, David Schers, an Argentine-Israeli, batted extemporaneous translations back and forth, and when all else failed, resorted to Yiddish.

Two invitations from two different quarters of the globe were extended at Albuquerque by potential hosts of our next conference. Helen Safa and Sam Proctor of the University of Florida at Gainesville proposed holding a joint conference on the Jewish experience for the 1985 segment of its series of annual conferences on Latin America – just 18 months after Albuquerque. Next, an invitation to collaborate with AMILAT in organizing the Latin American section of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies, to be held in Jerusalem in August 1985, was issued by Israel Even-Shoshan, a member of the scholarly collaborative that had been tapped for the task.

Conflicted at first by this embarrassment of riches, all parties worked amicably to find a way for LAJSA to consider both invitations. As the Ninth World Congress was locked into a global calendar of long standing, Proctor agreed to postpone Florida's proposed Jewish-themed conference until its Latin American semester of 1986, leaving LAJSA free to accept AMILAT's invitation to Jerusalem in 1985. LAJSA speculated on the two conferences drawing somewhat different participants and that enough new scholarship would have been produced in the interim to guarantee a high quality program at both venues.

With two future conferences scheduled for successive years by two major hosts, LAJSA was on an upward trajectory. At the business meeting, I was able to inform members that LAJSA had been incorporated as a non-profit corporation. We should now act to regularize our operations as required by law. A committee of three volunteers— Mirelman, Levy, and Sandra McGee (shortly to marry and add the name Deutsch)—undertook to draft bylaws. These were published in the Newsletter and a ballot distributed with the September dues bill. The bylaws were accepted as published in the following issue of the Newsletter. Thereafter, a nominating committee comprised of Ansel, Levine and Nora Glickman arranged for the election of officers. Our 127 paying members (from 21 countries) approved the slate comprised of Robert M. Levine, vice-president, Victor Mirelman, secretary, Bernard Ansel, treasurer, and Daniel Levy, Sandra McGee Deutsch, Henrique Rattner, and Saúl Sosnowski, trustees, with me continuing as president.

For the association to achieve significance, it had to be seen as more than one person's obsession. It was necessary to engage the effort and the authority of a cadre of committed colleagues. Lacking the benefit of email,

yet to be invented, I consulted with the board by telephone, placing calls after 11 p.m. to take advantage of reduced rates. Most supportive in these late night consultations were Levine, Sosnowski, and Glickman. As faculty members at their respective universities, they supplied me with advice and guidance through academic culture. Meanwhile, multiple financial and administrative details all had to be handled in one place, while the distance between Ann Arbor and any other board member led to my taking on most tasks myself. I assumed that would be for a limited time, until LAJSA became a going concern with an actual office located in someone else's actual office.

For the time being, as membership applications and dues, publications, queries, and conferences increased, correspondence flooded into my home from all corners of the globe. Most were in the familiar conference languages but there were also outliers in French and Polish. Each received a response for which at times considerable research was required. I dearly felt the lack of an institutional context which might have brought with it an actual office, a typing pool, a mailroom, letterhead stationery, and the collegiality of a break room.

Until such time as a base might materialize, I became secretary, treasurer, editor, publisher, and shipping clerk. In these capacities, I taught myself budgeting, banking, postal regulations, telephone rates, copyright, and the law relating to non-profit corporations. Basic expenses for rent, utilities, office equipment, and travel expenses were paid by a disinterested philanthropist (my husband Sol Elkin). Mass mailings were folded and stuffed into envelopes by an assistant who accepted food and lodging in lieu of cash (my daughter Susannah). No person ever drew a salary from LAJSA.

Publishing the Newsletter required keeping up with fast-changing print technology. For the first two years after completing my fellowship at American Jewish Archives, I would type up the manuscript and run the pages through the mimeograph machine at a copy shop. Eventually I began patronizing a commercial printer, who showed me how to copy fit. But the arrival of computerized printing required a more intense learning curve. Evolving bibliographic styles had to be mastered in order to cite new publications, which authors were sending me for listing in the Newsletter. When I learned that a computer program could relieve me of this task, I purchased a copy of the first available version of ProCite, against the advice of its inventor, Victor Rosenberg, who warned me that all the bugs had not yet been worked out of it. Next, having created a file of citations, I took the file to the only printer in town who advertised computerized printing; she produced 12 pages of pied lines that had to be sorted out byte by byte. The result of the combined can-do spirit of all parties is *Resources for Latin American Jewish Studies*, LAJSA's first publication. That was 1984; the bibliographic resource is still useful 30 years later.

LAJSA expenses were about \$5000 per year; the most that could be collected from our present membership base was \$2000. For the present, the gap was being filled by grants from WJC and AJC, but these would soon run out.

The need to develop a financial base for LAJSA and to diffuse responsibility for running the organization was recognized and discussed at the Albuquerque board meeting. It was agreed that, at a minimum, US and other members from hard currency countries should be expected to pay their dues. As an international organization, payment of LAJSA dues was

understood to be restricted by exchange regulations that made the transfer of funds from Israel and Latin America difficult or impossible.

Various funding alternatives were suggested, the primary one being to identify a permanent host institution; Hervitz and others offered to pursue that goal. If one could not be found—and none ever was—perhaps board members could interest the institutions where they were employed in sponsoring a specific LAJSA activity, picking up its related services and cost.

With no experience at institution building, I visited and conferred with contacts and acquaintances at the Library of Congress, National Endowment for the Humanities, Hunter College, and the American Historical Association. I also talked with friends who were involved in similar efforts—at this date, pioneers in forming feminist associations. Acting on their advice, and relying on my qualifications as a former United States Foreign Service Officer and author of the newly published *Jews of the Latin American Republics* (University of North Carolina Press, 1980), I gained interviews with executives at a dozen foundations, including the Ford Foundation, Revson Foundation, American Jewish Congress, Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, National Foundation for Jewish Culture, Wexner Foundation, World Jewish Congress, and the Tinker Foundation. Tinker was the only foundation I contacted that was totally uninterested in Latin American Jewish studies.

Jewish organizations responded more favorably to the topic and to my quest for financial support: American Jewish Archives by sponsoring our conference and publication of our first works; American Jewish Committee by its appointment of Jacobo Kovadloff as liaison and supporting publication of our conference reports; and the World Jewish Congress, by its

offer to invest in the Albuquerque conference, followed by a stipend to pay LAJSA expenses for the next 3 years. LAJSA's experience with the World Jewish Congress illustrates the issues that arose in connection with organizations far larger, older, and better endowed than LAJSA.

WJC, a United Nations NGO, describes itself as "the diplomatic arm of the Jewish people" and was a notable presence throughout Latin America. In August 1982, WJC's Israel Singer invited LAJSA to become a think tank for that organization. As a first step, LAJSA might organize a symposium to discuss current topics at the upcoming WJC conference in Mexico City. If people were impressed, Singer suggested, he might be able to obtain some serious funding for LAJSA. WJC, Singer stressed, was not a philanthropic organization.

Should LAJSA agree to this relationship, Singer emphasized, WJC would not ask for any political orientation; members would remain free to express their opinions. LAJSA would remain independent intellectually and organizationally. In exchange for financial support, LAJSA would make its services available as a group or identify individuals who could write special reports exclusively for WJC. The arrangement would benefit all parties: WJC could facilitate research visits to Latin America and LAJSA might facilitate visits to the US by WJC people. WJC could publish LAJSA conference papers, possibly through the facilities of the Institute for Jewish Affairs in London, an autonomous branch of WJC.

WJC's attractive proposal became the subject of late- night telephone consultations among members of the LAJSA board. As we discussed the offer, the political subtext of grant receiving began to emerge. WJC and AJC were generous donors. It was their funds that allowed us to function at our present level. Their grants also instilled confidence in us that it might be

possible to sustain LAJSA as a serious academic association. Neither organization had ever made a request of us as a quid pro quo; only helpful insights into the world of Jewish politics had been offered.

But being funded by an organization that was larger and more powerful than ourselves, and whose agenda might not always be congruent with LAJSA's, raised issues we had not faced until then. Dependence on an outside body carried implications that might outweigh at some point our need for financial support. Consequently, the board decided against forming a continuing relationship with WJC. But the offer, and our deliberations over it, helped us define the nature and character of LAJSA. We had begun as a mixed academic/communal organization, open to winds coming from every direction. Once members aspired to acceptance into the academic world, LAJSA moved to safeguard its academic independence.

March 11, 2016

Chapter 3 Jerusalem - LAJSA III

The international character of LAJSA was reinforced by participation of many *lajseros* in the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem August 5-12, 1985. Over the course of a week, the Congress attracted thousands of scholars and artists from every geographic and intellectual precinct of the Jewish world. Although this was the ninth of the Congress' quadrennial conferences, it was the first in which Latin America was recognized as a singular field of research.

The Latin American sessions were co-sponsored by three associations identified here by their initials: ISCJ, AMILAT, and LAJSA. Each brought to the table its unique expertise and resources. The Institute for the Study of Contemporary Judaism at Hebrew University had trained a generation of scholars in research into multiple areas of Jewish life. Students who had been mentored by Haim Avni, director of ISCJ's Division for Latin America, Spain and Portugal, went on to form the scholarly cooperative Asociación Israelí de Investigadores del Judaísmo Latinoamericano. AMILAT did the hands-on work of organizing the Latin American section of the World Conference and subsequently edited the proceedings for publication by Hebrew University. (*Judaica Latinoamericana: Estudios Histórico-Sociales*, Jerusalem 1988). Fully one half of the presenters at the Latin American sessions were members of LAJSA, which at that date had 300 members in 20 countries.

In his introduction to the published proceedings, Avni refers to the previous year's LAJSA conference at the University of New Mexico. Reflecting on the growing interest in Latin American Jewry, he asks

rhetorically, “Is there justification for such broad, intensive research in one branch of contemporary Jewish life? Does Latin American Jewry indeed merit such interest”?

Avni provides his own response: “Professor Gilbert Merx, in his introduction to *The Jewish Presence in Latin America* tries to answer this question from the vantage point of the Latin-Americanist. He considers the role of the Jews as actors in the ongoing process of economic, social and political change in LA and meditates on the character of Latin American society as revealed by the experience of the Jewish minority. We will address the subject from the Jewish standpoint and observe Latin American Jewry from two seemingly opposing perspectives: the uniqueness of the community and its parallels with other Jewish societies in the Diaspora.”

With these two conferences, the gulf between Latin American studies and Jewish studies narrowed. The perception of a Latin American Jewish identity, previously denied or ignored, was seen to be real. That unfortunate reality was confirmed by investigations into the actions of the military during the Process of National Reorganization (1976-83), the “Proceso” that governed Argentina through the deployment of brute force that, while aimed at the general population, was saturated with anti-Semitism. It was becoming increasingly clear that the Latin American Jewish experience was both an element of the Jewish diaspora and a dimension of Argentine society.

The Latin American sessions of the conference attracted some 50 scholars from round the world, including Poles and Uruguayans, Jews and non-Jews, Jewish and non-Jewish Latinos. The research they presented ranged as widely as their geographic origins. The opening presentations featured veteran scholars of the colonial and early independence periods, including Seymour B. Liebman, Zvi Loker, Anita Novinsky, and Gunter

Bohm. The following panel, on immigration to Argentina from Eastern Europe, continued the ongoing process of filling in the demographic profile of the Jewish peoples of Latin America.

From that point on, conferees entered contemporary territory with presentations that included, among many others, David Bankier on the Free Germany movement in Mexico, and Ignacio Klich on Argentina, the Arab World and the Partition of Palestine. Nelson Vieira presented his thoughts on Jewish resistance and resurgence as literary metaphors, while Silvia Trentalance de Kipreos spoke on the sense of *Argentinidad* in Alberto Gerchunoff. Speakers did not avoid confronting controversial topics: Margalit Bejarano spoke about the deproletarianization of Cuban Jews, Efraim Zadoff about Jewish education in Mexico and Argentina, and Judit Bokser Liwerant on Zionism and the Jewish community of Mexico.

Literary criticism emerged as a major interest among LAJSA members, with a panel chaired by Sosnowski on Latin American-Jewish literature; Carlos Waisman described the image of Jews drawn by right-wing authors. Early techniques of oral history as practiced at an institutional level were presented by Jeffrey Wigoder (ISCJ), Proctor (U. Florida) and Anita Weinstein (Centro Marc Turkow) Buenos Aires. Levine continued his venture into the filming of history with “Hotel Cuba, a Historical Diary of the pre-Castro Jewish Experience.”

Conference participants did not spend the entire week in lecture halls. Responding to interest in Latin American Jewish transplants in Israel (both an academic subject and a real-life experience for some who were present), visitors were bussed to Bror Hayil, the Brazilian kibbutz, and to Mefalsim, kibbutz of the Argentines, whose social hall sported what was said to be Israel’s first espresso machine. A visit to the Israel State Archives was

arranged to facilitate access for foreign scholars to its documents. The formal events were capped by a reception at the home of the President of Israel where Liwerant introduced participants to acting president Yizhak Navon.

Considering the enthusiastic response by scholars to calls for papers on LAJ themes, one could well ask, what had held back scholarship until this time? The answers might be found in a combination of social and political circumstances.

1. The study of Jewish Latin Americans was primarily delayed by objective reality: their small number, their lack of political power, and their distance from world centers of communication, their isolation rendered more extreme by the lack of coverage by the foreign press. Together, these factors created abroad a fog of indifference to the LAJ experience.

2. The defensive posture adopted by LAJ community leaders must also be taken into account. The desire to avoid friction with elements of their national societies typically led the elected leaders of Jewish communities to maintain a low profile. Their hermetic concept of the appropriate public relations stance created insurmountable barriers for the few scholar-adventurers who endeavored to gain access to records or to people for meaningful interviews.

3. Judaic Studies as an academic discipline was still quite young; its internal dynamics inclined its disciples to focus almost exclusively on European Jewry and the Holocaust, with corresponding lack of attention to Latin America.

4. For scholarship to move forward, it was also necessary to create the necessary reference materials, and to overcome the disinterest of publishing houses in this arcane subject. All together these factors limited the

acquisition by libraries of such materials as existed, which led in turn to their omission from standard reference works. Personal anecdote also suggests that university-sponsored research was constrained by an academic wall of separation between Latin American and Judaic studies departments, whose faculties had difficulty imagining a LA/Jewish hybrid.

Underlying the emergence of Latin American Jewish Studies in the 1980s were several cultural currents that ran counter to those just mentioned: the emergence of ethnic studies, beginning with the legitimation of black studies; the formation of centers for Jewish studies in Israel and the United States; enhanced sensitivity among Latin Americanists to the existence of non-Catholic, non-Latin enclaves in their mental map of the continent's peoples. Unfortunately, one must also add worldwide cognizance of anti-Semitic activity provoked by incidents such as the publication of Jacobo Timerman's prison memoir.

This nexus of social and political currents was the context for the founding of LAJSA. Publishing is always dependent on the existence of scholars and scholarship, and these must always have existed. But individual scholars of LAJ studies had never before had channels of communication or an organization to bring them together in a recognizable cohort. LAJSA brought their scholarly efforts into focus, attracted enough practitioners to form a network of supportive colleagues, and built a platform from which to present new ideas. In this light, the mere appearance of the name LAJSA on conference programs and in professional journals may have contributed to the legitimacy of our subject. LAJSA provided LAJS with an address – virtual for now, hopefully institutional in future.

At a boisterous business meeting during the Jerusalem conference, members of AMILAT pressed for representation of their group within

LAJSA, with designated positions on the board reserved for one of their number. Their indisputably important intellectual and organizational contributions called out for recognition. Furthermore, the potential number of adherents to their group may have included more actual Latin American Jews than LAJSA could ever muster. LAJSA, based in the United States (and presided over by an anglophone) cast a larger and wider network of members, but their interests were less narrowly focused than AMILAT's on the LAJS project.

My resistance to AMILAT's request arose from concern that, given the cohesion of the nine-member collective and the inchoate condition of LAJSA's board, LAJSA could be converted into an Israeli organization. Alternatively, group representation of AMILAT might provoke the formation of other factions (Argentine, for example), leading to the geographic fragmentation of LAJSA. My efforts to this date had been directed toward countering the centrifugal forces of geography. I believed that the bond holding LAJSA together was its members' professional interests, not their national origin. Recognizing national blocs could destroy that unity. Although at this meeting one LAJSA board member and I were outnumbered by AMILAT and unprepared for their demand, I was able to maintain the principle of 1 member 1 vote and with it, the unity of LAJSA. I was exceedingly happy that, over the years, while AMILAT maintained its admirable record of achievement as a collective, its members subscribed to LAJSA as individuals and as friends.

LAJSA-related professional activities -- research, publication, and conferencing -- increased exponentially in the mid-1980s. Reviews and listings of new publications and conferences filled an eight page LAJSA Newsletter, now issued semiannually. Each edition carried a growing list of

monographs and articles by LAJSA members, as well as entire bibliographies. Centro Marc Turkow of Buenos Aires published a two-volume *Bibliografía temática sobre judaísmo argentino* as well as shorter lists. David William Foster and Naomi Lindstrom published a valuable checklist of Argentine Jewish writers. Vol. 6 of the Newsletter carried specialized bibliographies on Brazilian Jews by Rifke Berezin, et al, and on president Allende and Chilean Jews by Allan Metz. Vol. 7 carried a bibliography by María Segura Hoopes on the Jews in New Spain, to which Alicia Backal added an equal number of citations in the following issue of the Newsletter, an important illustration of the ways in which the distinct literatures visible to Latin Americanists on the one hand, and to students of Jewish history on the other, need to be considered together to complete our understanding of LAJ history. Two syllabi, by Glickman and by Lindstrom, had been developed for teaching LAJ studies and were made available to members. I was compiling and distributing a new membership directory every other year, and a survey of members was circulated through the Newsletter. Survey results were collected and compiled by Enid Baa, head librarian of the island of St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands. The hope was eventually to develop a profile of members and an inventory of their research interests, but incomplete responses forestalled that outcome.

Meanwhile, the Newsletter itself was favorably reviewed by *Choice*, publication of the American Library Association. As 100 academic and public libraries customarily refer to *Choice* reviews in selecting their own acquisitions, the review became another element in making our subject known. It also generated contributions to the LAJSA treasury, as libraries paid regularly and well for their subscriptions. It also appeared that LAJSA was retaining a balance between Latin Americanist and Jewish libraries:

Nathan Kaganoff, librarian of the American Jewish Historical society, sent congratulations to the LAJSA editor on the *Choice* review, and Celso Rodriguez, editor of the *Inter-American Review of Bibliography*, Organization of the American States, congratulated me “from one editor to another.”

By 1985, LAJSA was no longer operating alone in our chosen field. New institutions not created by LAJSA were arising in response to heightened public and academic interest, while some existing institutions took note of LAJ studies for the first time. Stanley Hordes and colleagues formed the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society, focused on discovering the contours of a converso presence in the western United States; the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith established the Jarkow Institute for Latin America; the Centro de Estudos Judaicos at the Universidade de Sao Paulo initiated a project to publish research on Brazilian Jews, including the invaluable work of Egon and Frieda Wolff. Rabbi Leon Klenicki and Eugene J. Fisher, executive secretary for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, were co-editing an ecumenical bulletin targeted at US Spanish-speakers. The University of Hamburg sponsored a seminar on Sephardim and the Caribbean organized by Gunter Bohm. The Jewish Studies Annual devoted its 1985 issue to LAJ literature, to be edited by Nora Glickman; George Zucker began to compile a directory of persons in the US who were working in the area of Sephardic studies. La Asociación de escritores judíos de habla hispana y portuguesa was formed in Jerusalem, where it launched the publication *Noaj* under Senkman’s direction; and a project to record the history of the Jewish presence in the Caribbean was undertaken by the Centro de Estudios Sefardíes de Caracas. These and other initiatives were made known through the pages of the

LAJSA Newsletter, turning it into a hub for the dissemination of relevant information.

The University of Florida at Gainesville

After the incredibly short interval of 18 months, LAJSA held its fourth international research conference, at the University of Florida at Gainesville, aided by the generosity of the University in paying the travel expenses of participants coming from abroad. “The Jewish Presence in Latin America” convened in February 1987. Any trepidation about the short span of time between conferences (was there sufficient talent/interest/research among LAJSA members to warrant our convening once more so soon after Jerusalem?) was washed away in the outpouring of new research and newly enrolled members.

At Gainesville, Sosnowski and Glickman demonstrated the advance of literary criticism with two panels that included Nelson Vieira, Ilan Stavans, Arnoldo Liberman, Gerardo Mario Goloboff, Aida Bortnik, and others whose reputation had yet to peak. Political dimensions of anti-Semitism were discussed by Edy Kaufman of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, with panelists Alicia Backal, Sandra McGee Deutsch, Margalit Bejarano, and Leon Trahtenberg of Lima’s Colegio León Pinelo. Thorny problems related to relations between Israel and Latin America were approached from their distinct perspectives by, among others, Ignacio Klich and Damián Fernández.

On the last day of the conference, LAJSA received an unexpected invitation from the Westfälische Wilhelmsuniversität Münster to a conference being planned in Münster, Germany in 1988. The emigration of European Jews to Latin America would be the topic as part of the

University's research into relations between Europe and Latin America. The invitation was brought to the Gainesville conference by Achim Schrader, professor of sociology at the University of Münster, who surprised me with the proposal over lunch. LAJSA was not being asked to co-sponsor the conference, but to act as a scholarly resource. Münster would welcome those LAJSA members who wished to participate.

Without knowing how members would react to an invitation to visit Germany (still proscribed by many Jews), I made a bench decision, creating space in the program for Schrader to address his invitation personally to the assembled audience. The response was overwhelmingly favorable, and the Münster conference received LAJSA's cooperation. (Proceedings of the conference, edited at the University, were published in 1989. *Europäische Jüden in Lateinamerika*. ed. Achim Schrader und Karl Heinrich Rengstorf. St. Ingbert: Werner J. Rohrig Verlag, 1989)

The rationale that persuaded the Association and the dozen LAJSA members who presented papers at Münster (myself included) was that a good faith effort from German intellectuals warranted a good faith response from Jewish intellectuals. The Münster collaboration represented for many a landmark in their intellectual orientation.

March 25, 2016

Chapter 4

Buenos Aires - LAJSA V

In the light of history, it was nothing short of astonishing that a weeklong academic conference devoted to the subject of Jews, organized by the Jewish community and hosted by the premier academic institution of the nation, could take place in the capital of Argentina. Five years after the start of a transition from the military rule of the Proceso to electoral democracy, LAJSA held its V Congreso Internacional de Investigadores sobre Judaísmo Latinoamericano in Buenos Aires in August 1988. Sponsored by AMIA-Comunidad Judía de Buenos Aires and by LAJSA, the conference took place under the academic auspices of Universidad de Buenos Aires, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and the University of Tel Aviv. Sessions took place on the premises of UBA as well as in various public spaces. Advertised by radio announcements and by posters posted across the city, they were public events such as could not have been imagined a few years previously, certainly not during my first research trip to Argentina in 1974, nor on subsequent visits as the dictatorship came unraveled.

Adding to the unusual nature of the event was the fact that an Argentine national university was collaborating with foreign universities, a sign that the self-imposed chauvinist isolationism of an earlier era was dissipating. The recognition that Jews in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem had legitimate ties to Jews in Argentina constituted a step toward recognizing the reality of pluralism in Argentine society.

The Congreso experience was a novelty for the Jewish community also. A Primera Conferencia de Investigadores y Estudios Judeo Argentinos en el Campo de las Ciencias Sociales y la Historia had been sponsored by

the AMIA in 1961, but its impact was severely limited by the national political ambience in that and the following decades. As organizers of the LAJSA V conference wrote in a prologue to the published proceedings, distribution of the results of Jewish academic research prior to 1988 had been restricted to a nucleus of communal leaders before being buried in communal archives. I myself, as a researcher with Fulbright credentials, had been unable to gain entrance to the AMIA library or archive on previous research visits. Later, I was turned away by guardians of the Centro de Estudios Sociales, which had been erected in the wake of the first research conference. In welcome contrast, the 1988 LAJSA V Congreso proceeded in apparent freedom from both public and communal barriers.

This willingness to open itself up to the general academic public and acknowledge internal differences was alive within the LAJSA Congreso, a remarkable tolerance in light of the mortal differences that ruptured the community during the recently ended years of the Proceso and its aftermath of recriminations. Congreso participants included students, teachers, communal leaders, journalists, professionals of all or no political orientation, who were, or aspired to be, the makers and shakers of renewed Jewish communal life. Their presentations endowed the community with a treasury of knowledge about itself. They constituted a declaration that facts and figures were no longer to be hoarded like the family jewels, but tools for conducting the community's business. This opening up of data previously held as private patrimony may have been what prompted the government to get involved in supporting a conference on Jewish themes.

According to the AMIA count, 350 persons participated in the Congreso, half of these Argentine and the rest coming from 14 countries ranging from Germany to Paraguay. Numerous Brazilians and Uruguayans

made their first appearance at a LAJSA conference, which also provided the first opportunity for US and Cuban scholars to meet in person. Some two thirds of participants were teachers and educators; 40% held positions of responsibility in their home Jewish community. Some 40 institutions were represented.

The intellectual tone of the conference was set by the keynote speaker, mathematician, philosopher and human rights activist Gregorio Klimovsky. Over the course of 5 days, conferees had the choice of nearly 100 presentations, organized into panels and round tables. Each panel was comprised of at least 5 participants and chaired by distinguished persons who were currently playing important public roles in Argentine national and Jewish life. These included Marcos Aguinis, Paul Warszawski, Jaime Barylko, Leopoldo Bartolome, Daniel Colodenco, Bernardo Kliksberg, Bernardo Blejmar, as well as LAJSA stalwarts Senkman and Sosnowski. Eleven round tables examined issues that ranged from the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on Argentine politics to the global resurgence of the Yiddish language.

Between presentations, Congreso attendees were treated to a variety of activities. A day dedicated to Jewish life in Argentina took participants through barrios traditionally associated with Jewish life, including Once, Villa Crespo and Belgrano, and included site visits to communal institutions both historic and those still in use. There was a reception at the Embassy of Israel, a colloquium with Jorge Sábato, at that date the Minister of Education, another with Oscar Shuberoff, Rector of the University of Buenos Aires, and receptions at several institutions, including the newly formed Instituto Argentino para Estudios del Holocausto.

A highlight of the week was a *charla* at the internationally known literary Café Tortoni. Taking part were four well-known Argentine intellectuals, now scattered to the literal four corners of the globe. They included Sosnowski (US), Arnoldo Liberman (Spain), Santiago Kovadloff (Argentina), and Senkman (Israel). While the speakers touched on such themes as books, geography, exiles, language, roots, identity, dreams, reality, and existential dilemmas, Uruguayo Egon Friedler writing in the Newsletter, identified a common core to their ramblings: “nostalgia por la Argentina en la Argentina.” Striving to grasp the essence of this nostalgia, Friedler discards the terms patriotismo, chauvinismo, argentinismo, argentinofilia, to settle finally on Argentinishkeit.

The Centro de Documentación e Información sobre Judaísmo Argentino Marc Turkow organized the conference on behalf of AMIA, and likewise undertook to edit and publish the proceedings. These emerged in two volumes, the first consisting of a summary of each paper followed by an English synopsis; the second reproducing selected papers in their entirety. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Mila, 1989 and 1990). Both were supported by a grant from the American Jewish Committee, mediated by the always present collaboration of Jacobo Kovadloff, now free to return to the country of his birth. Collaboration in organizing the program as well as financial assistance came from the Jewish federations of Sao Paulo and of Montevideo, while AMILAT undertook organizational tasks from Israel.

As successful as the Congreso was for its participants, an additional value accrued to LAJSA itself. This consisted of the connection with Centro Marc Turkow and its director, Anita Weinstein. The Centro and its personnel now emerged as valuable if informal partners in the international exchange of scholars and scholarship. As in the case of AMILAT, no formal group

adhesion existed nor was one required, as individual scholars who were introduced to LAJSA in Buenos Aires joined the association and began to make their own connections across international borders. LAJSA now had fraternal relations in two hemispheres, centered in Jerusalem and Buenos Aires.

The LAJSA business meeting that followed the conference tackled two issues. First, how LAJSA could embrace scholars who were not based in the United States, especially younger ones who were unable to tap into funds for international travel. Arrangements had been made with AMILAT for payment of reduced dues for the entire group in a single sum. Additional suggestions focused on the search for angels: philanthropists, compatible institutions, or publishers looking for the next marketable book. Hugo Hervitz and Lois Baer Barr volunteered for this task. Members were also reminded to keep ordering *The Jewish Presence in Latin America*, as editors Elkin and Merx had assigned royalties to LAJSA.

The second issue was whether LAJSA conferences should have a specific theme. Members were urged to consider ways in which a Jewish dimension could be included in the many celebrations being planned worldwide around the upcoming Columbus Quincentenary. The January 1988 Newsletter noted that Alicia Gojman de Backal was coordinating a conference on “El impacto del Encuentro de dos Mundos” held at the Museo Nacional de Antropología e Historia. The Department of Spanish & Portuguese at the University of Maryland planned a series of academic activities around the cultural encounters provoked by events of 1492. Judith Elkin was awarded grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities in support of a yearlong series of symposia on the dual significance of 1492, to be entitled “Jews and the Encounter with the New World.” For discussion

by the Board: should LAJSA also undertake programs to memorialize the dual quincentenary of the “Discovery” and the Expulsion? In response, the Board commissioned Judit Liwerant to explore a suitable institutional base for holding such a conference, possibly in Mexico.

The Board also discussed the invitation from AMILAT to co-sponsor sessions at the quadrennial World Congress of Jewish Studies - the Tenth, to be held in Jerusalem in August 1989. The invitation was discussed against the background of the fact that in the seven years since its formation, LAJSA had already sponsored five international conferences.

In financial terms, LAJSA’s informal home office in Ann Arbor had been strained to the utmost by continual preparation for the next big event. By far the major expenditure attendant on these meetings was the effort to raise funds to defray travel expenses for members (primarily Israeli) who could not otherwise have attended. Buenos Aires had exhausted the treasury.

In academic terms, the sense of the Board was that LAJSA should limit the frequency of conferences in order to maintain its high standard of scholarship. While declaring LAJSA’s moral support and offering the use of its mailing list and the Newsletter, the Board declined AMILAT’s invitation to co-sponsor the Latin American sessions at WCJS X.

Relations with LASA were also discussed. Since the 1982 demarche, relations between the two had improved. In contrast to the exclusion of earlier years, several LAJSA members had had papers accepted for presentation at the LASA conference scheduled for Sept 21-23, 1989, in San Juan, PR. A ceremony was also planned to honor Kovadloff at that time, on the occasion of his retirement from the American Jewish Committee. A work of Jewish cutwork art by Mary Etta Moore entitled *Bereshit* (Genesis)

was commissioned for presentation to him in gratitude for his contributions to LAJSA.

Hurricane Hugo had other plans: the LASA conference was postponed in the face of the advancing storm. The specially commissioned work of art was presented privately to Kovadloff on a visit to New York. The conference was held later that year in Miami. At that time, LASA facilitated LAJSA attendance by allocating travel funds to participants who had planned to attend at Puerto Rico.

Chapter 5

Maryland & Philadelphia - LAJSA VI, VII

From Baltimore to Philadelphia

University of Maryland – LAJSA VI

LAJSA VI convened at the University of Maryland at College Park on October 6-9, 1991, hosted by Saúl Sosnowski with support from several units of the University and the Jarkow Institute of ADL. The conference attracted scholars from the US and abroad, including a host of Spanish and Portuguese language authors and poets. No fewer than 47 papers were selected for presentation, so that for the first time at LAJSA conferences simultaneous sessions were scheduled in order to fit all the papers into a reasonable time frame.

Between Avni's opening address on building an agenda for the study of the last fifty years of Latin American Jewish life, and Elkin's closing remarks on the "double quincentenary," participants could choose among a wide range of panels and discussions. Jewish Dimensions of 1492 featured Eva Alexandra Uchmany on "La participación de los judíos, conversos y cristianos nuevos en el descubrimiento de América," Joao Sedycias on "Renaissance of Sephardic Communities in Northeastern Brazil," Alicia Backal on "La formación de la sociedad crypto-judía en Nueva España," and Stanley Hordes on "The Sephardic legacy in New Mexico." Hordes was at that date just forming an organization dedicated to uncovering a possible history of crypto-Jews in the American Southwest.

A later panel, El legado de Sefarad, brought Gilda Salem Szklo, Eleonora Noga, Alberti-Kleinbort, and Angelina Muñiz together in an evening further enriched by an encounter with the eminent Israeli

folklorist/anthropologist, Dov Noy. Two literary panels chaired by Nora Glickman and Edna Aizenberg presented Nelson Vieira, Edward Friedman, Gerardo Mario Goloboff, and Ricardo Feierstein, the latter two speaking for the first time to a North American audience. Another panel on contemporary Latin American Jewish literature was led by Stephen Sadow.

A panel on Peronism and the Jews, chaired by Deutsch; Jewish Agricultural Colonization in Brazil and Argentina, chaired by Kovadloff; and panels on Twentieth Century Jewish Migration to Latin America, led by Albert Blaustein and Regina Igel, filled out the program. Exhausted listeners could browse the exhibit of books by LAJSA members, enjoy a banquet, renew old relationships or form new ones at a reception hosted by the University.

A unique feature of the program was the showing of a documentary film produced by Mark Freeman. *The Yidische Gauchos*, narrated by Eli Wallach, includes historic footage of the Jewish agricultural colonies and interviews with surviving “gauchos.” At the LAJSA showing, the film evoked whoops and cheers at the appearance of long unseen friends and family hanging in out there on the Argentine pampas.

At the business meeting that followed, the Board took up an issue that I had raised with members individually and collectively over the years, more emphatically in recent months. In the January 1992 issue of the Newsletter I summarized these for the membership.

“As we complete our tenth year of existence, LAJSA has achieved the primary goals we set ourselves in 1982. We have gained recognition for Latin American Jewish studies in the academic world. Publishers seek out manuscripts in LAJ Studies and they refer manuscripts to our members for peer review. We have created a network of scholars from three continents,

sparkling fruitful intellectual exchanges and collaboration. Our research conferences have generated considerable interest: proceedings of four out of our five earlier conferences have been published and planning is underway with respect to the sixth. Increasingly, data and insights from our studies are absorbed into the larger fields of Latin American and of Jewish studies, as well as into popular literature.

“These achievements have come about without LAJSA having a formal structure. With no bureaucracy or support staff, I have edited and published the Newsletter, read and annotated current publications in the field, edited or collaborated in editing conference proceedings, overseen conference arrangements, negotiated copyright and tax issues, answered inquiries, collected dues, maintained membership records, collated and published several membership directories, and other activities too numerous to mention. I have been fortunate in being able to draw on the advice and support of Board members. And the reward has been tremendous: the satisfaction of seeing a dream grow into reality, and the privilege of forming rewarding personal relationships with colleagues in 24 countries.

“We have now reached the point where fundamental changes must be made in the way that LAJSA operates. One-person management is no longer sufficient if we want LAJSA to develop and thrive in its second decade. No one person can guarantee the continuity of an organization; that can only come about through the efforts of many individual members working together. New ideas, new initiatives should come from newer, fresher leaders.

“Speaking personally, the administrative tasks of running the association have become burdensome. I want to devote more of my time and energy to my own research and writing. I hope I am not deluding myself in

believing that I can contribute more to LAJ studies through scholarly work than by carrying out administrative tasks. The only project I plan to retain from the long list mentioned above is that of editing the Newsletter, which I founded two years before LAJSA came into existence.” (Judith Elkin).

Not surprisingly, I was never able to persuade anyone to accept the fulltime, unpaid position of president. Although I was honored to be continuously reaffirmed as president, LAJSA was not intended to become a one-(wo)man operation. At LAJSA VI, the Board responded to my concerns, passing three resolutions designed to diffuse responsibility for governing the association, to professionalize the process of scheduling and holding our conferences, and to develop an institutional base that could put us on a business footing, freeing Association officers of the need to perform clerical tasks.

Members began to come forward. Lesser agreed to develop a formula for organizing our conferences, to be circulated to members for comment. Issues to be addressed included whether to schedule simultaneous sessions on literary vs historical topics or consecutive ones only, in order to preserve the interdisciplinary exchanges that had been a feature of previous LAJSA sessions. Another question that arose: ought LAJSA adopt a specific theme for each conference, or simply schedule panels around topics as they were proposed?

David Sheinin, together with Barr, Deutsch, Anita Weinstein, and Florinda Goldberg, formed a committee to evaluate conference papers with a view to publication. Subsequently, Sheinin and Barr co-edited *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies in History and Literature*, a redacted version of selected papers presented at the University of Maryland conference. (New York: Garland Publishing Co., 1996)

The search for an administrative home for LAJSA at an academic institution was once more explored at this meeting. But the search for a host never succeeded. In a cogent letter to me, Avni outlined the reasons he believed it was never going to happen: “I hope you know how much I appreciate your devotion to LAJSA and your determination to keep it going even though we all know that you received only moderate (if at all) support from your colleagues... This is precisely what makes me wonder how exactly you perceive the transition of which the board is talking? Is there any possibility to ‘sell’ LAJSA to a university or other academic institution when the terms of the ‘sale’ are so one-sided: all the costs for the customer and still the name, the operation, the independence, to remain the same... As the Head of our Institute I know how much opposition I would have faced if I would have come to my colleagues with such a proposal. Are things at your end so much different?”

With a sufficient number of electors present, a renewed board of 8 highly committed LAJSA members was elected to our governing board. They included Robert M. Levine, Lois Baer Barr, Sandra McGee Deutsch, Jeff H. Lesser, Victor A. Mirelman, Saúl Sosnowski, Daniel J. Elazar, and, for the time being, myself. Hoping for an orderly transition as I gradually relinquished specific tasks, I declared that I would not be a candidate in our next election, two to three years hence.

Meanwhile, I was still trying to hold the group together with inadequate funds. I made various attempts to control expenses. One tack was to negotiate with the Instituto Cultural Judaico Marc Chagall in Porto Alegre to copy the Newsletter and distribute it to our 34 Brazilian addresses, and with the Centro Marc Turkow in Buenos Aires to do the same for a like number of Argentine members. The Centros could charge an appropriate fee

to cover the expense, and LAJSA would regard those who paid locally as LAJSA members. Though LAJSA would derive no income from this arrangement, it would reduce our costs while keeping our Argentine and Brazilian members engaged. This arrangement worked imperfectly for two years, when it was happily superseded by the development of international mechanisms for the transfer of funds.

LAJSA was still trying to gain bibliographic control over the literature. Diverse efforts were underway. Frank Joseph Shulman, curator of the East Asia Collection at the McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, and a charter member of LAJSA, was supplying me with references to doctoral dissertations in our field, all of which found their way into the Newsletter. Robert Singerman was completing his manuscript on *Spanish and Portuguese Jews: A Classified Bibliography*, to be published by Greenwood Press. Ana Lya Sater and I co-edited *Latin American Jewish Studies: An Annotated Guide to the Literature*, published by Greenwood Press in 1990. While I compiled and annotated monographs, dissertations, and articles, Sater surveyed the holdings in US libraries of LAJ serial publications. David Hirsch offered to continue current listings for non-periodical publications, an effort that would be facilitated by the advance of technology at UCLA, where he was librarian. This all transpired before an “internet” had evolved for popular use. As up-to-date as LAJSA could get: the current issue of the Newsletter advertised BITNET and FAX addresses for some of the most proactive members.

The early 1990s were an extraordinary time for publishing on LAJS topics. The speed and relevance of publication would tax the resources of a squad of bibliographers. The papers delivered at the Buenos Aires AMIA and the Munster conferences were edited and made available in print. Two

monographs that are the bedrock of LAJ studies were revised and re-issued, appearing in English translation for the first time: Haim Avni's *Argentina and the Jews: A History of Jewish Immigration*; and Victor Mirelman's *Jewish Buenos Aires, 1890-1930*. Naomi Lindstrom published her insightful *Jewish Issues in Argentine Literature: From Gerchunoff to Szichman*. Lesser announced the forthcoming publication of his groundbreaking *Welcoming the Undesirables: Immigration Policy and Jewish Exclusion in Brazil, 1930-1945*. This would soon be followed by his imaginative collaboration with Ignacio Klich that produced *Arab and Jewish immigration in Latin America*, which significantly broadened the perspective of practitioners of LAJ studies. The emergence of Brazilian Jewish scholars at this time was notable, including Eva Alterman Blay, Regina Igel, María Luiza Tucci Carneiro, Roni Cytronowicz and Gilda Salem Szklo. Edy Kaufman was co-ordinating a comprehensive research project on Jews under the Argentine repression; Raanan Rein had entered the field of Israel-Argentine relations.

Also at this time, an informed discussion broke out in the pages of the Newsletter around Albert Prago's article on "Anti-Semitism in Spanish Dictionaries." (Vol. 12 #2) A response from Nicolas Sanchez-Albornoz of Instituto Cervantes (an early friend of LAJSA) assured us of his interest in collaborating with the effort to eliminate any trace of anti-semitism from Spanish dictionaries.

The Newsletter also reported on several dozen Quincentenary observances worldwide that had relevance and resonance with the Expulsion. One that involved several LAJSA members in its creation was "Voyages to Freedom: 500 Years of Jewish Life in Latin America and the Caribbean." This travelling exhibit of photographic reproductions of original artifacts and documents was organized by the Jarkow Institute of ADL. With

the support of the New York State Endowment for the Humanities, it circulated on loan to libraries and museums throughout the United States.

Philadelphia – LAJSA VII

“1492-1992: An Evaluation of the Quincentenary Commemoration” was the announced theme of LAJSA’s Seventh International Research Conference. It was held at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs in downtown Philadelphia at Temple University’s Center City Campus, on November 7-8, 1993. LAJSA had been invited by Daniel J. Elazar, director of the Jerusalem Center, which is actually centered in Jerusalem, accounting for the fact that Elazar himself was unable to be present at our proceedings.

Though not as heavily attended as earlier conferences, Philadelphia attracted scholars who were exploring previously unstudied themes. A panel organized by Klich on the immigration of Sephardim to Latin America included Juan Bta. Vilar and María de Mar Vilar on Moroccan Jewish migration to Latin America, Bejarano on Turkish Jews to Cuba, Walter P. Zenner on Syrian Jewish immigration, and Liz Hamui-Halabe on Alepine Jews in Mexico. “Jewish Latin American writers”, a panel organized by Barr, included Florinda Goldberg on Alicia Steimberg, Lindstrom on Tamara Kamenszain, Angelina Muñiz-Huberman on converso writers, Barr on Teresa Porzecanski, and Edna Aizenberg on theorizing LAJ literature. The most eccentric (in the best sense of the word) panel ever presented at a LAJSA conference included María del Carmen Artigas on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Cábala, Thomas Orum on Women of the open door: Jews in the belle-epoque Amazonian demimonde; Jill Yesko on Jewish travel literature; and Ineke Phaf on Jews in Surinamese culture.

A panel moderated by Sheinin showed Jewish Cuban studies to be in the earliest stages of historical research: personal reminiscence. The panel organized by Klich and Lesser on Jewish scientists in Latin America exposed an underside of the history of science, with its characteristic elision of Jewish personalities and accomplishments. Nora Glickman's contribution required audience participation. A troupe of amateurs selected from among those who arrived first in the auditorium presented "Raquel de la Migdal," an early draft of Glickman's historical drama based on the life of the woman who brought down the cartel of Jewish pimps in Argentina.

The Board decided not to try to publish the Philadelphia proceedings, as the breadth and variety of topics made it unlikely they could be fashioned into a coherent volume. However, the panels on literature and science, each presenting multiple perspectives on a defined topic, appeared likely to gain publication in an academic journal.

In 1993, Robert Levine, a founding member of LAJSA and its longtime vice-president, retired from LAJSA's board, as did Deutsch, who had joined LAJSA shortly after its formation. Distressed by the loss of these valued advisers (whom I nevertheless continued to consult), I realized this was actually a sign of organizational vitality, as 2 members now came forward to take their place on the Board. With new members Marifran Carlson and David Sheinin, Board business continued uninterrupted. This included an unscheduled meeting of members who coincidentally happened to be in Ann Arbor at the same time: Barr, Deutsch, Mirelman, Clifford Kulwin, and myself, with Jeff Lesser participating by telephone.

The January 1993 Newsletter reported a stimulating variety of events and personalities. Goldberg reported that the Asociación internacional de escritores judíos en lengua hispana y portuguesa, based in Israel, had just

held its third conference, in Miami during that city's Book Fair. Allan Abravanel, who had discovered a possible 3000 to 5000 Abravanel families in the world today, held the second Abravanel family reunion at the Casa del Sol in Ganot, Israel. Henrique Rattner was traversing a large portion of that world, having recently visited China, India, Russia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Mexico and Brazil, where he attended the America 92 conference organized by Anita Novinsky.

Rochelle Saidel and Ari Plonski presented a joint paper on the transfer of science and technology from Europe to Brazil due to the flight from Germany and Austria, at the August 1992 conference of the Society for the Social Study of Science in Gothenburg, Sweden. And LAJSA mounted what was essentially a mini-LAJSA conference during LASA XVII in Los Angeles in September 1992, where Klich and Lesser presented a panel contrasting Brazil's Getulio Vargas and Argentina's Juan Perón. In addition to the organizers, speakers included Roger Gravil and María Luiza Tucci Carneiro. A second LASA panel, on ethnic identity among immigrants in urban settings, presented Jose Moya, George J. Sanchez and Aida Mostkoff Linares, with myself as chair. The intellectual energies of LAJSA members were not, and were not intended to be, confined to LAJSA precincts. An important element of LAJSA's agenda was the integration of LAJ studies into general Latin American and Judaic studies, and this clearly was what was happening.

March 25, 2016

Chapter 6

Mexico – LAJSA VIII

Elegance, efficiency and erudition combined to make LAJSA's eighth international research conference an exhilarating experience.

LAJSA VIII convened in Mexico City November 11-14, 1995. It was sponsored by two universities, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and Universidad Iberoamericana; and by all four Jewish Comunidades-- Askenazi, Sefaradi, Maguen David and Monte Sinai. The Comité Central Israelita de México and Bank Hapoalim in México each hosted entire days or special events. Indispensable coordination and administration were provided by the Asociación Mexicana de Amigos de la Universidad de Tel Aviv.

The conference opened on a Saturday evening in the viceregal Salon de Actas of UNAM's Palacio de Minería, where members were greeted by the Regente de la Ciudad and the Rector of UNAM, among other notables. Over the course of three days, conferees met in different relevant locations including the Museo Franz Mayer and the auditoriums of the respective sponsoring hosts. A literary evening, now a tradition of LAJSA conferences, was held at the famous Fuente de la Huerta in Tecamachalco. The logistics involved in ferrying several hundred delegates and support staff through Mexico City traffic and getting everyone to sessions and meals on time were executed with tact and military precision under the direction of Alicia Gojman de Backal, with the assistance of her spouse Isaac Backal, president of Amigos de la Universidad de Tel Aviv.

Two hundred and eighty scholars came from the United States, Canada, Brazil, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina, England, France, Spain, Mexico and Israel

to present papers at LAJSA VIII. Fifty-nine scholarly institutions also were represented during the course of the proceedings. Attendees could choose from among 18 panels of literary and historical presentations, while the category of Jewish identity received heightened attention. The number and scope of scholarly papers made for difficult choices for participants, but a satisfying group experience was provided by the showing of a newly released film, *Un beso a esta tierra*, which dramatized one Jew's twentieth century arrival in Mexico.

At the heart of the conference was an exhibit of illuminated certificates of *hidalguía*, testimony to the bloody pursuit of racial purity in colonial New Spain. Introduced by the rector of Universidad Iberoamericana, the terrible beauty of these illuminated plaques celebrating the supposed "clean blood" of their donors defied the ability of an observer to absorb them at first sight, intellectually and emotionally.

LAJSA's first ever publication awards were announced at this conference by judges Sheinin, Glickman, and Joseph Schraibman. At a luncheon on Sunday I had the pleasure of presenting the award for best book in LAJ studies to Robert M. Levine for his monograph, *Tropical Diaspora: The Jewish Experience in Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993). Roberto Grün was awarded the prize for best article for his "Identidade e Representação: Os Judeus na Esfera Política e a Imagem na Comunidade."

Almost simultaneously with LAJSA VIII, the exclusionary attitudes that had kept Mexican Jewish archives closed to researchers were relaxed, leading to publication of a full library of revelatory books. The early 1990s saw publication of *La población judía de México: Perfil demográfico, social y cultural*, by Sergio DellaPergola and Susana Lerner. The superbly produced *Imágenes de un encuentro. La presencia judía en México durante la primera*

mitad del siglo XX, an eight-pound bound album of photographs, documents and text covering the Jewish presence in Mexico from Spanish colonial rule to the present was compiled and edited by Judit Bokser de Liwerant. *Testimonios de historia oral. Judíos en México*, published by Hebrew University's Institute for Contemporary Jewry and Asociación Mexicana de Amigos de la Universidad Hebrea de Jerusalén, catalogued the interviews recorded by personnel trained and directed by Alicia Backal. Also under Backal's direction, a team of historians, archivists, photographers and consultants both Jewish and non-Jewish produced *Generaciones Judías en México. La Kehila Ashkenazi (1922-1992)*, comprised of seven volumes handsomely presented as a boxed set. Eva Alexandra Uchmany's *La vida entre el judaísmo y el cristianismo en la Nueva España 1580-1606* (México: Archivo General de la Nación, 1992) won the Premio Internacional de Literatura y Ciencias Históricas "Fernando Jeno" for that year.

The same Newsletter that described arrangements for Mexico City also announced preparations for the next election, the first in which I would not be a candidate. This was a liminal moment for me. I was torn between wanting to preside over LAJSA forever, and longing for release from the interminable round of administrative responsibilities. I had never lost the thrill of watching LAJSA grow—I reveled in every new membership by another scholar, another library, or another continent heard from. But as the years passed and I faced the task of setting up another issue of the Newsletter, overseeing arrangements for another conference, organizing another mass mailing, teaching myself another computer program while technology danced tantalizingly ahead of me, I began to feel like the sorcerer's apprentice

Although more members were volunteering for individual tasks, no one had stepped forward to take overall responsibility. And who could be faulted

for that? As the role had developed, all administration depended on one person; the presidency was a heavy responsibility to take on. But history, especially Latin American history, is littered with wreckage left behind by presidents who governed alone and failed to provide for succession. As a JLE Association, LAJSA would disappear if anything happened to JLE. For LAJSA to continue, members would have to take responsibility for running it. Of course, it was flattering to be urged to remain as president-for-life, but I wanted to leave with confidence that LAJSA would continue in existence because members cared enough to take charge.

Just in time, LAJSA board members responded to my urging. Unsurprisingly, no one could be found willing to devote his or her life fulltime to the unpaid position of LAJSA president. But members arrived at a pragmatic solution: a prestigious figure for president and a working board of directors.

The officers who emerged from these calculations were a mix of “old” and newly active LAJSA members. All were productive scholars who possessed impressive credentials from major universities. All gave promise of contributing substantially to LAJSA’s ongoing development. Announced in January 1996, LAJSA’s new officers were:

President, Nelson Vieira (Brown University);

Vice-president, Naomi Lindstrom (University of Texas, Austin);

Secretary, Jeff Lesser (Connecticut College);

Treasurer, Peter T. Johnson (Princeton University);

Board of Trustees: Edna Aizenberg (Marymount Manhattan College), Margalit Bejarano (Hebrew University), David Sheinin (Trent University), and Saúl Sosnowski (University of Maryland).

I remained on the Board as founding president and editor of the Newsletter, encouraged by messages such as this from Henry Green: “I was saddened to hear you are stepping down as president but . . . heartened by your decision to stay on as editor. . . . I cannot tell you how invaluable the Newsletter has been to me and to my students.” At the Board’s suggestion, I dropped the signifier “Newsletter.” *Latin American Jewish Studies* had morphed from an ephemeral bulletin of news into a professional journal purveying substantive content, a useful permanent reference and a necessary acquisition for academic libraries.

At Mexico VIII’s Sunday lunch where book awards were announced, members also awarded me a plaque as “outstanding scholar in Latin American Jewish Studies, in appreciation of (your) lasting contribution as inspiring founder and leader of LAJSA.” The presentation by Victor Mirelman was drowned out by a rousing ovation from the audience. Their cheers brought me to tears, and marked the apex of my professional career. That moment provided closure to my years’ long effort to bring the association to birth and keep it going until others came forward to lead it into its next decades.

Coda

At the 1996 LASA meeting in Washington DC, LAJSA’s old and new boards met together to pass the torch forward. At that time, I handed

LAJSA's founding documents and current correspondence to incoming president Vieira.

I deposited all LAJSA files accumulated during my presidency, including correspondence, financial records, conference programs and ephemera, at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. In 2007, I donated my books in Latin American Jewish history and literature to the Harlan Hatcher graduate library at the University of Michigan, where they may be retrieved by entering my name in the search engine. As I was ending my tenure as president, Lindstrom established LAJSA-list, which became the electronic nervous system of the association. This largely superseded the "newsletter" function of the printed *Latin American Jewish Studies*, which continued to publish substantive articles under the editorship of Joan Friedman and her successors until the next Lindstrom initiative, the creation of our website.

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