Online Translation

Reading a Russian Website

JewishGen researcher Marilyn Robinson is very clever at finding and deciphering online sources in languages other than English. Although she doesn't speak Russian, she skillfully uses online translation tools to access the growing number of genealogical websites and databases published in that language. Although computer translations are inexact and can be frustrating, the results are promising. Here's Marilyn's advice:

If you don't read Russian, you can use an online translator such as Bing Translator or Google Translator or download the Google Chrome browser and use its built-in translator. Sometimes a complete web page's translation is too large for the program to complete, and part of the page reverts to Russian. If so, simply highlight the remaining un-translated information, copy it, and paste into the Google or Bing translator box (Marilyn prefers Google's, but sometimes compares the results in both if the initial translation is gobbledygook).

Download any of the following, to convert the website into the language of your choice:

1. Google Chrome - For PC, Mac, and Linux (translates the entire website)
www.google.com/chrome

and/or

2. Google Translate - its "boxes" translate text you paste in)
http://www.google.com/language_tools

3. Or download the Google Toolbar for Internet Explorer or Safari. The toolbar includes a translation button:

4. If you have the latest version of Internet Explorer (IE 9) you can easily translate the webpages by right clicking with your mouse and selecting "translate with Bing."
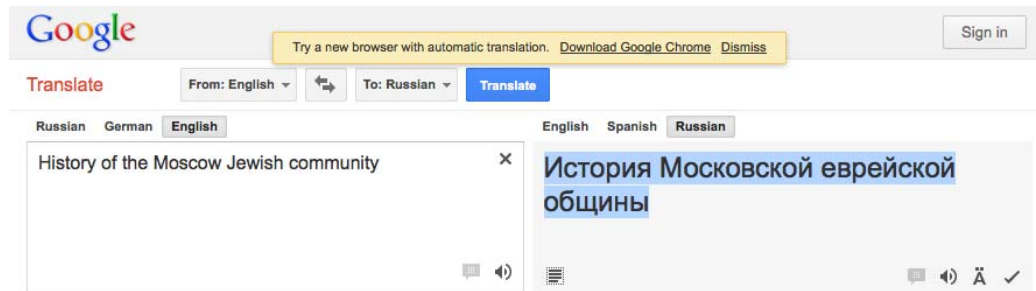
5. Or, use Bing translator found at: http://www.microsofttranslator.com/

Coping with Cyrillic

Would you like to search the web in Russian? Google Translate makes it easy. Go to Google Translate (URL above), set the language choices for English to Russian and type your name or phrase. Then highlight the translation, right click on it, and from the window of choices that appears, select "Search Google for... (your phrase)." Bingo! You can read the search results with one of the website translators listed

above.

Don't Forget Google

Jo Ann Goldwater, an active contributor to JewishGen, struggled to locate Russian records until she tried a simple tactic. She shares the following tips:

For several years I had been looking for information about my great uncle, Dr. Abraham Ber Leib Kahn (known as Dr. Boris L Kagan in Russia) and I hadn't been able to find anything. Relatives told me that he was a prominent, much loved physician in Voskresensk and he died there in 1912 at the age of 42, after he contracted typhus from a patient. He also worked at the Sydenham Hospital in NYC from 1908 to 1910, but I wasn't able to find out anything from his time there because the records seem to have been destroyed.

Last year I had the idea to ask someone who spoke Russian if they could look his name up on the Net. I was hoping to find out if the hospital he established there still exists. Not only did I find out that it exists, but I discovered that last October they unveiled a plaque to his memory. Imagine my surprise to find out that he is still remembered there. Then I discovered that it is not too difficult to do a search using Google translate. You can find sites, and it will do the translation. It takes patience, and it's not perfect, but you can find out quite a bit of information.

Following that, I decided to get a Russian translator to help me. On one of the sites that we found, she was able to get in touch with the town historian, who was very interested in my great uncle's story. He sent me wonderful photos of my uncle, his grave, and his wife and children and we have exchanged information.* The tombstone was destroyed at some point, and we are hoping now to get it restored. The story is told that Abraham (Boris) contracted typhus after he found a sick woman on the street and carried her to his hospital.

So because of basic research on the Net, I was able to find wonderful information about my great uncle. It may not be of use to everyone, but don't forget Google and Google translate. Good luck to you all in your research.

* Editor's Note: To see the results of Jo Ann's search, read "Boris L. Kagan: Physician,

Educator, Activist and Revolutionary" in the Family Stories section.