



Growing a JGS: FINDING SPEAKERS

Deborah Long, [Triangle Jewish Genealogical Society](#) (2015) Revised 2022

Finding speakers is usually a function of the program topic. In other words, once you determine what topics your members are interested in, then find speakers who can discuss the topic articulately.

With today's technological advances, there are no shortages for bringing your members exciting topics and speakers on Jewish genealogy and related subjects. Zoom has made it possible to bring in experts from all over the country and even the world.

Consider the following possible local sources of speakers:

- university and college teachers in religious studies, Judaic studies, history, humanities, language, sociology departments
- professional genealogists: see [Cyndi's List](#) and providers of genealogy services (conservators, for example)
- archivists and librarians
- historical societies
- rabbis
- authors
- local Family Search library centers (Mormon church) volunteers
- DNA, adoption, military experts

Some tips:

- Look at the forthcoming programs of nearby JGSes and see if a speaker can be shared.
- Attend programs offered by non-Jewish genealogical societies in your area. Frequently, programs about general topics, such as research methodology, can be of interest to JGS members.
- Engage your Board to help you find speakers.
- Vet your speakers—this is important. Find out where they have spoken before and if they were successful. With many speakers now available on-line you can access a wider geographic universe. Attending the IAJGS conference is one way to identify speakers who are good presenters on relevant topics.
- A note: many people are afraid of public speaking and/or are poor at it. Vet *all of your speakers* in order to insure a high-quality program. A knowledgeable speaker doesn't necessarily mean a good presenter. You can ask your speaker for references or for a short video or audio clip. Assure that your speakers know the location of your meeting (or link if online), the time allotted, and the audience's needs and expectations. A speaker form can be used to communicate necessary information between your JGS and the speaker. Offer an honorarium, at least to cover travel expenses and/or perhaps a gift certificate. You can always offer a free membership in your group for one year.

Let other JGSes know if a speaker is travelling to your area or if one of your JGS' members are travelling to their area in case programs can be shared.

You may be inspired by the Jewish Genealogy Society of the Conejo Valley and Ventura County's robust education program. This organization maintains a list of past program presenters [here](#).