

Project Proposal and Bibliography

For my major project this semester I have elected to work alongside the Ashfield Polish Club in Sydney.

Community Work:

The Ashfield Polish Club is located at 73-75 Norton Street, Ashfield and was established by Polish migrants following the Second World War. Originally created as a meeting place for veterans and refugees, today the club exists as a space for both Polish and non-Polish people to come together in a safe and supportive environment. In 1964 the Club was financed by the 208 founding members and was officially recognised as a licenced premises in 1967.¹

The club hosts various events throughout the year including dance parties, musical performances and luncheons as well as historical conferences and showcases. (For example, the recent unveiling of new symbols commemorating the Warsaw Uprising during the Second World War). The Club also has a small library with hundreds of Polish books available for reading and browsing. Images of the library are included in Annex A of this proposal.

While renewing my Grandma's membership at the Ashfield Polish Club earlier this semester, I became engaged in a discussion with Lucian Romanowski who informed me that the Club needed someone to look at its history and take part in the renewal process. I had only been to the club once or twice in my lifetime and I discussed the possibility of providing my time in assisting the club, and Lucian subsequently became my main contact at the Polish Club. Lucian has been a member of the club for some time and provided contact between myself and the members of the Board. I am in the process of speaking directly to the Club President but so far this has proven difficult due to timings. Lucian's primary e-mail contact is :

lucianenter@gmail.com

My role at the Club is to support the Club's endeavours to remain relevant in a 21st century context and to assist in the creation of an accessible historical narrative.

¹ Polish Club Ltd., *Polish Club Ashfield* [web] (2013) <http://www.polishclub.net.au/>

Major Project

For my project, I propose to make a documentary-style film that aims to explore what role the club plays in a contemporary Australian setting for both Polish and non-Polish people. I hope to achieve two aims. Firstly, to document the incredible history of the Ashfield Polish Club and the surrounding community in the hopes that the club will act as a microcosm of the wider migrant experience in Australia. Ideally the project will reflect changing attitudes from both within the migrant community and the wider Australian population. Secondly, I hope to raise awareness for the Club, and to encourage younger generations to become involved in the Club's activities. I believe the medium of film is most accessible for contemporary generations.

The key question I hope to address is; what purpose does the Club serve today and how can this be explored further?

Given that I plan to make a documentary-style project, my work will rely heavily on oral testimony and spoken reflection from Club members. My Grandmother was one of the earliest members of the Club and I have had many good conversations with her over my lifetime and I am very excited to film these conversations. I hope to create enough rapport with members of the club for them to speak to me on camera about their lives and their experiences with the club. Ideally, the interviews would be conducted through a mixture of *lasse-fare* and formal conversations.

Alongside interviews, I will rely on photographs and newspaper articles from previous decades. Annex A to this document contains a selection of images that I have personally taken at the Club and provide examples of some of the primary sources that I will be utilising. I have also sent a formal request to the ABC for access to their archives in an attempt to find footage of the club from the 1960s onwards.

From a technical standpoint I feel confident in my post-editing abilities. I thoroughly enjoy creating films and the editing of the film does not bring about any major concern. I plan to film using a GoPro camera to enable me to be as unobtrusive as possible and allow me to experiment with different cinematic techniques.

My biggest concern is how the finished product will be received by the club members themselves. I would like the film to be as professional as possible and have put a lot of pressure on myself to get this right. However, I balance this worry with the thought that even though I do not have access to high quality cameras and equipment, this could be the beginnings of a larger and more professional documentary in the future. Language may also pose a difficulty as I know very little Polish. I very much hope that interviewees will feel comfortable speaking in English or I may be lucky enough to ask someone to assist me with translation (although that would be a very big undertaking and brings its own challenges and nuances in terms of semantics and wordplay).

Another concern (as all those with less than ideal time management skills will attest to), is the limited timeframe in which I now have to complete this project. It has been hard to strike a balance between pressuring the Club to return e-mails and phone calls and letting things run their course. It has been some time since my last visit and it is coming to the stage where I am organising a teleconference with the president because he will be unable to meet with me in time to give the full approval for the project. Generally though, the members of the club have been incredibly accommodating and swift in their responses to queries and I am eternally grateful.

Overall, this course so far has been utterly invaluable in influencing the way I am attempting to go about this project. I genuinely shudder to imagine how I would have approached a community organisation before being introduced to the subtleties and nuisances of public history and, if nothing else, this has been a phenomenal experience in interacting with people and personal stories.

In a time of heightened fear and concern surrounding migration and population shifts, I hope to play some small role in reminding the community that immigration has played a major role in creating the Australian way of life.

Bibliography:

Primary sources:

Catholic Weekly, 'Special Mass For Polish Catholics' *Catholic Weekly* (Sydney: Catholic Weekly, 1942 – 1954) published 6 October 1949 [web] <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article146660170>

Please refer to Annex A for further primary sources

Secondary sources:

Donnelly, Mark. Norton, Claire, *Doing History* (Great Britain: Routledge, 2011).

Durant, Will. Durant, Ariel, *The Lessons of History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968).

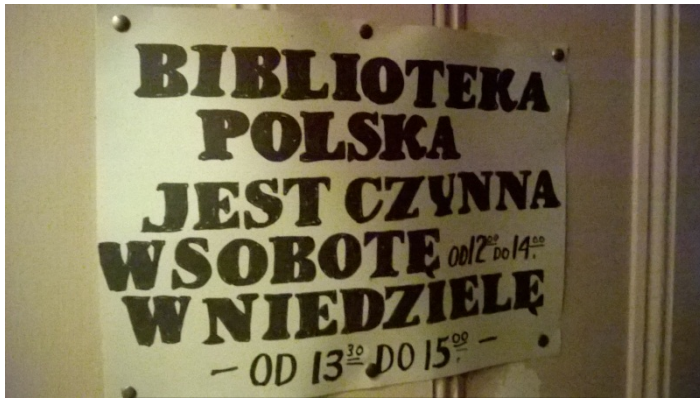
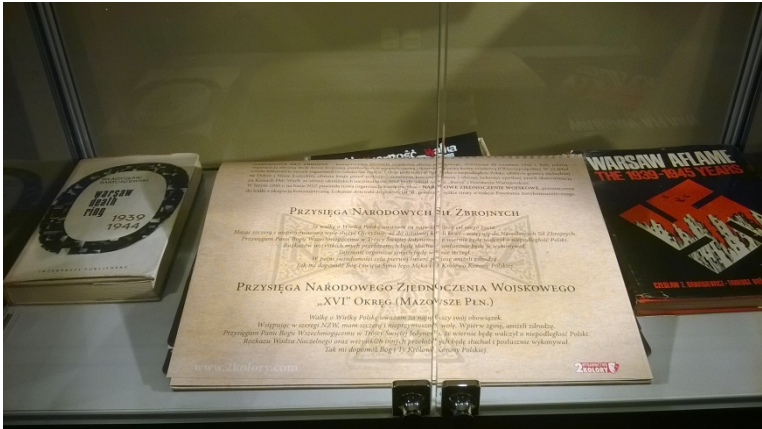
Flinn, Andrew, 'Community histories, community archives: some opportunities and challenges', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, [web] 28/2, 2007, pp.151-176.
http://www.researchgate.net/publication/32895233_Community_Histories_Community_Archives_Some_Opportunities_and_Challenges1

Oskipictures, 'Mezo ft. Ania Spice – Polish Club in Ashfield 26.02.2011 (Australia) – TV Ad' YouTube (2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwiFAAGI07g>

Polish Club Ltd., *Polish Club Ashfield* [web] (2013) <http://www.polishclub.net.au/>

Rees, Laurence, *World War II Behind Closed Doors: Stalin, The Nazis and The West* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2008).

Annex A



Translation: Polish library is open on Saturday 1200 to 1400 and on Sunday from 1330 to 1500

