

The Vision of Alfred Yarbus

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Alfred Lukiyanovich Yarbus (1914–1986) is best known for his pioneering experiments on vision with stabilized retinal images and also on how the eyes move over patterns. The experiments he conducted in the 1950s and early 1960s were described in his seminal book *Eye Movements and Vision* (Figure 1) which was published in Russian in 1965 and translated into English two years later.

To commemorate the centenary of the birth of Alfred Yarbus, an international symposium on the *Role of Eye Movements in Vision – Yarbus-100* was held near Nizhny Novgorod, Russia from September 1–5, 2014 (<http://iitp.ru/en/news/1228.htm>). The symposium was organized by the Institute for Information Transmission Problems (IITP; Kharkevich Institute) of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Yarbus worked at this Institute from 1963 to 1986. Galina Rozhkova, Andrei Sobolevsky, Andrey Bolshakov and Maria Gracheva formed the organizing committee for the conference. To foster the younger generation of eye-movement researchers, the *Yarbus-100* symposium was merged with an annual IITP *School of Young Scientists* and the conference *Information Technologies and Systems-2014 (ITaS'14)*; <http://iitp.ru/en/conferences/itas>).

This combination shaped to a large degree both the programme and the body of participants of the *Yarbus-100* symposium. In particular, the symposium programme included keynote lectures by Nicholas J. Wade (UK), Susana Martinez-Conde (USA), Artem V. Belopolsky (The Netherlands) and Martin Rolfs (Germany). Over the five symposium days talks and posters were presented, and three master classes were delivered—on eye-tracking systems, methods and packages of data analysis. In addition, the symposium participants enjoyed a film on eye movement recording techniques in Russia 50 years ago, as well as experiments on afterimages during body motion in darkness, demonstrations of lightness perception and illustrations of art and illusions.

The presentations at *Yarbus-100* provide the basis for this Special Issue of *Perception* that includes reviews, full-length articles and short reports of experimental studies. The contents of the articles reflect the constant concerns as well as the changes that have taken place in the study of eye movements over the last 50 years. Interest in stabilized retinal images remains, but marked technical developments in eye-tracking devices have resulted in experimental manipulations and models that Yarbus would have found hard to imagine. Some papers were presented by his former colleagues but, for the majority, Yarbus was known only from his scientific writing. Moreover, his investigation of attentional effects on patterns of eye movements has stimulated a vast amount of related research, as is evident in many of the articles.

Rather than referring to specific contributions, we will leave it to the readers to determine what is of significance for them. One article should, however, be singled out for mention—that by Alfred's daughter, Franchesca Yarbusova. To the astonishment of many present at the symposium, Franchesca described details of Alfred's early life which had been confined to the family circle and were contrary to the brief statements made by Alfred

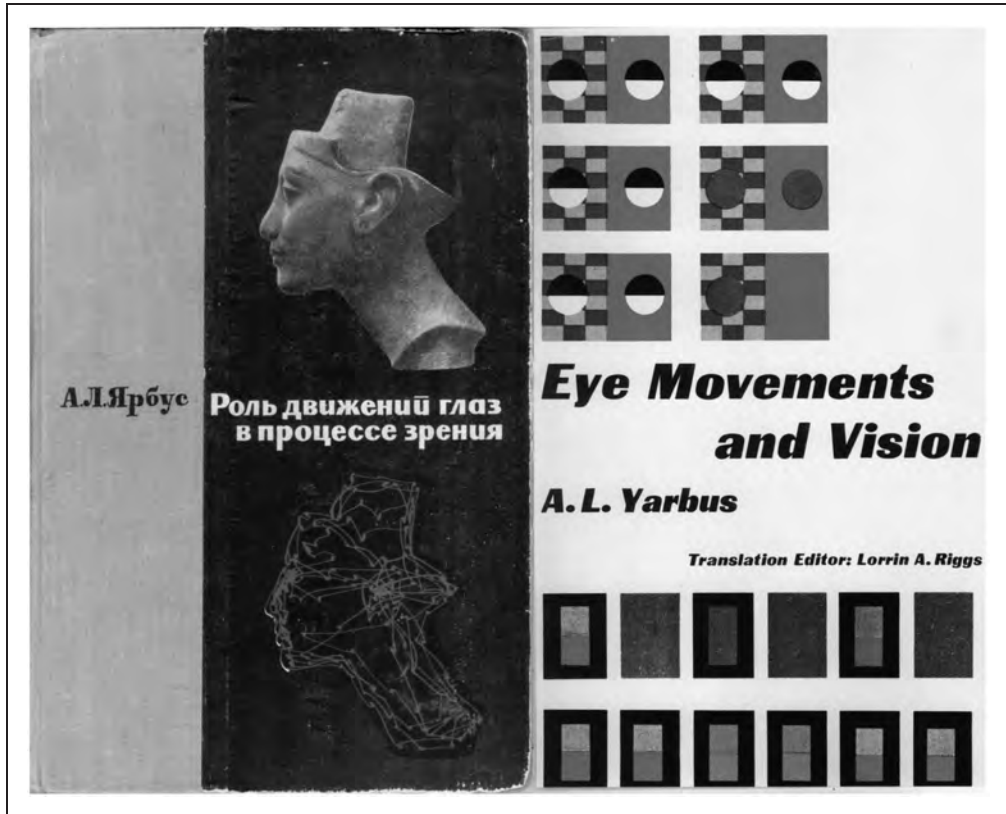


Figure 1. The covers of the Russian (1965) and English (1967) versions of Yarbus's book.

himself. He was born Alfred Janovich Kraćkowski in Poland and moved to Russia with his mother around 1926. Having lost contact with his father, his mother married Lukiyan Ivanovich Yarbus whose name Alfred adopted. Franchesca Yarbusova's request is "that all references to my father should note in parenthesis that his real name was Alfred Janovich Kraćkowski."

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