

NYMA News

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Genealogy and Jews at Spring 1999 Conference

by Elisheva Schwartz

Interest in genealogy in the Jewish community has grown by leaps and bounds in the last few years, and Judaica librarians are often called upon to provide guidance to patrons interested in tracing their roots. Those of us fortunate enough to attend "Jewish Genealogical Resources for Librarians," held Wednesday, May 12, at the 92nd Street Y, walked away with a wealth of information to use in our future research.

The first presentation, by Steve Siegel, librarian of the 92nd Street Y, was a bibliographic overview, entitled "Books, Microforms, CD-ROMs, and Websites for Genealogical and Historical Research." Not only was this relevant for librarians working with genealogists, but it was useful for research in twentieth century Jewish history in general, and Holocaust history in particular. Attendees came away with a good grasp of the available literature, as well as several concise and focused bibliographies.

Miriam Weiner, certified genealogist and Head of the Routes to Roots Foundation, presented an entertaining and informative account of her work in "Jewish Roots in Ukraine, Moldova, and Poland: Pages from the Past and Archival Inventories." Along the way we learned about the wealth of archival information still available in the "old country," the idiosyncracies of working with a post-Soviet bureaucracy, and the heroic efforts made by individual archivists across Eastern Europe to preserve materials and make them available to researchers. We even heard about the state of indoor plumbing in certain locales!

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Technology the (Jewish) Star at Fall Workshop

by Ori Laudén

Is the future of Judaism becoming totally wired? Those who attended the fall workshop might agree. AJL-NYMA's "Technological Application for Today's Libraries," held at Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) drew a packed audience of librarians and wannabe web-surfers.

Sara Spiegel, of the University of Pennsylvania, began the session with an introduction to online Judaica acquisition resources on the Internet. Her handout, which included URLs of Jewish search engines, Judaica publishers, and foreign vendors, was especially useful for locating out-of-print books or for bargain hunting.

Edith Lubetsky, of Stern College, explored Bible Studies on the Net, in particular sites for students, teachers, and academics. Her excellent handout of Bible Web-sites enabled librarians to help students locate different translations of the Bible, or to find the latest scholarly research.

Amy Helfman, of Hebrew Union College, gave an amusing talk about improving communications between libraries and Web masters. She proved herself quite a mistress of the Web by showing pages she created, as well as her favorite sites. Included in her lecture were valuable tips on handling the vast electronic world as well as troubleshooting problems.

During the final part of the program the guests were treated to a sampling of multimedia CD-ROMs available at the JTS library. Librarians Yisrael Dubitsky and Batya Kaplan presented ORT'S "Navigating the Bible," in which were heard the text of Torah and Haftarot, with punctuation and cantillation notes. Among its other features was the option of either simultaneous transliteration or translation and commentary from Aryeh Kaplan's *Living Torah*.

All in all, the event left attendees not only fascinated but appreciative of Judaica's new technology and, hopefully, one step in tune with the digital era! ☆

Yiddish and Retrospective Conversion Highlight 1999 Cataloging Workshop by Sharon Hammer

NYMA's annual cataloging workshop took place on February 25th at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). The program focused on two topics of recent interest in cataloging: changes to Library of Congress (LC)'s romanization rules for Yiddish, and retrospective conversion projects in a variety of Judaica libraries.

YIDDISH OR HEBREW?

The first part of the workshop was presented by Dr. Bella Haas Weinberg. As one of the foremost authorities on Judaica and Hebraica cataloging, and a passionate advocate for the accurate representation of the Hebrew language, Dr. Weinberg ably demonstrated some of the quirks and intricacies of Yiddish grammar and their significance for cataloging practice, particularly their relation to LC's romanization rules.

Two LC policies are slated for change. Originally, Yiddish forenames of Hebrew origin were romanized as Hebrew names, i.e. *Moshe* instead of *Moisheh*, or *Sim.hah* instead of *Simkkeh*, following the modern (Sephardic) pronunciation. As Dr. Weinberg humorously pointed out, this policy led to a pattern of "*kil'ayim*," a forbidden mixture of two species, since established Yiddish names would often contain surnames romanized according to their Yiddish pronunciation and forenames according to the Hebrew. In the future, LC will romanize forenames of Yiddish authors as they would sound in Yiddish.

The second rule change concerns cases in which Yiddish words contain dieresis, defined as the "juxtaposition of two vowels without an intervening consonant." Previous LC policy was to insert a *y* between the two vowels. Dr. Weinberg explained why, in cases of dieresis beginning with the letter *yod*, such a practice inaccurately represents this letter's function. Instead, LC has accepted the suggestion to simplify the romanization of vowel combinations beginning with *yod* by omitting the "y" (i.e. *hebreish* instead of *hebreyish*).

RECON REVIEW

The second half the program featured a panel of representatives from institutions which are all in the process of retrospective conversion. Chaya Weisman, librarian at Ramaz Upper School, explained how the school's quest for a feasible method of recon was made more urgent by the opening of a middle school in September 1999 and the planned creation of an automated union catalog for lower, middle, and upper school collections. The lower school opted for out-of-house recon, but disappointing attempts at MARC conversion through NYCSLS and OCLC led the upper

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(Genealogy, Cont'd)

Zachary Baker, presently head librarian of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research and soon-to-be Curator of Judaica and Hebraica at Stanford University, spoke on "Memorial Books (Yisker-Bikher): What They Are, How They Originated, Who Uses Them and Where They Can Be Found." Yisker-Bikher are rich sources of information for investigators of 20th century Eastern European history. We were introduced to the basic structure of this genre, as well as its limitations and its strengths for genealogical research. Several specific examples were shown, including a new Yisker-Bukh about an attendee's ancestral town.

The conference was thorough, organized, and fun. A big *yasher koach* to its organizers — Rita Lifton, Steven Siegal, and Liza Stabler — and to our speakers! ☺



Loving the Environment at Day School Workshop *By Faya Cohen*

On Tuesday April 27 I had the pleasure of joining a dozen other librarians at the Spring AJL/NYMA Day School/High School Workshop, held at the Hebrew Academy of Nassau County (HANC). Just being in its new, state-of-the-art library was treat enough for many of us. But the program "A Jewish Perspective on the Environment: Sources and Resources" provided an equally fascinating agenda.

Principal Rabbi Joshua Schonbrun welcomed us, sharing his pride and excitement in having finally attained the goal of a new library. He confided that he now realized "how important a library really is."

Beginning the program was Emi Gittleman, Science Coordinator of the Ramaz Lower School, in Manhattan. Emi, who heads a lending library created specifically for her science class, spoke of the connection between nature and Jewish values. She tested us with sample questions from her Tu B'Shvat trivia game, then presented us with some excellent materials, including a new *Jewish Gardening Cookbook and Sourcebook on the Environment and Ecology*.

The highlight of Emi's talk was her slide show of her recent trip to Israel. With the help of some stunning photographs, she gave over her insights, in particular of the strong link between Judaism and the environment. Some examples were the Biblical Zoo, where a hands-on interaction with nature is encouraged; the preserve Naot Kedumim, where soil from all over Israel has been gathered to create a national environmental center; and the sense of history that is constantly preserved or reenacted through archaeology, terraced farming, or memorial centers.

Emi concluded her talk with a quote from Rashi, in reference to the first few plagues of Egypt. Why didn't Moshe bring them about himself, instead of relying on G-d? The answer: these plagues are not things that apply to humans alone, but to all of the earth's creations. Here, too, a reference to the environment.

The next speaker was Marion Stein, librarian of Har Torah. Herself an avid gardener, Marion has always expressed interest in ecology. She began her talk by quoting Psalm 92, which provided a springboard for gaining an appreciation of nature as expressed through Radak's commentary. She discussed two particular *mitzvot*, *ba'al taaschit* and *tzaar baalei chaim* (the prohibitions against destroying something which can still be used and against harming

animals), as well as the importance of water, which is celebrated and expressed in many ways in Judaism and the Hebrew language. Among her recommended books and journals were *Nogah HaReuveni; Trees and Our Biblical Heritage, Od Kedumin*, and the *Nature Bible*.

Dianne Romm, District Library Chairperson of the Uniondale Public Schools, spoke of her experiences as consultant to HANC, guiding them every step of the way in the creation of their library. Meyer Mandel, Assistant Librarian, answered questions about its day-to-day functioning.

Al alcharon chaviv: last but not least was Noreen Wachs, Librarian of Ramaz, who besides being the MC of the workshop had prepared a list of Rabbinic sources referring to the environment — animals, trees; in short, anything that is G-d's property.

Although one of the intended presenters, HANC Librarian Joyce Levine, was unfortunately sitting *shiva* that week and was therefore unable to be there, our many thanks go to the other presenters Eileen Shmidman, Elana Gensler, and Noreen Wachs, for making this event possible. We left truly inspired, and eager to incorporate special programs into our own schools for Tu B'Shvat and for Earth Day!*

(Cataloging, cont'd)

school library to take a different route. A consultant was hired to assist in all aspects of the recon project, from choosing software to barcoding, and the library purchased 2 programs which allow them to work in-house on their 22,000+ volumes, at a much lower cost than outsourcing. Using Bookwhere, a \$39.50 search engine developed in Canada, their clerk searches and downloads a choice of over 100 library catalogs on the Internet and, with the help of Mitinet software, edits and barcodes the matching MARC records. Cataloging in-house has allowed for greater accuracy and the opportunity to weed the collection and reassign appropriate books to the new middle school.

Marcia Goldberg spoke next about her frustrating attempts to establish a recon project at Gratz College. Outsourcing is costly, while in-house recon requires steady funding and a well-trained support staff. In addition, one quarter to one third of Gratz's holdings are in Hebrew or Yiddish (and they hope, with the promised upgrade of Mandarin, to have Hebrew OPAC capabilities); but the number of vendors who

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(Cataloging, cont'd)

perform Hebrew recon are scarce. At present, Mrs. Goldberg performs Hebrew recon on RLIN "in her spare time," using the bonus searches generated from original cataloging and establishing NACO records. English records are also inputted at a slow pace on OCLC during the cheaper evening and weekend hours.

NYPL PROGRESS

Paula Charry followed with a report on the New York Public Research Libraries' successful grand-scale retrospective conversion project. Roman-alphabet recon, which includes the records of the Jewish Division, started in January 1996 and is expected to run until December 2000. Of approximately 2.3 million titles needing recon, about 1.5 million have been entered in CATNYP, the NYPL catalog, to date.

The NYPL library works with OCLC, which searches for records and modifies them, adds NYPL's class mark, and sends the produced records overnight to NYPL for uploading the next morning. OCLC also creates a master record for original titles and refers any unclear cards back to NYPL, where an in-house staff of 8 devotes itself to solving the problems.

Hebrew-alphabet recon is a more recent project that started in August 1998 and is funded by a Dorot Foundation grant. Currently, one librarian plus support staff enter the records using RLIN, much in the same way as for new acquisitions, but working from cards instead of from the books themselves. 880 fields are included in many of their MARC records, since the library hopes to be able to display Hebrew-character data in its OPAC by the end of the year. The current database of 3.5 million records, including some Jewish Division records, are already available on the Web at www.nypl.org.

IRONIES AND DILEMMAS

To round off the program, Clifford Miller, a cataloger at JTS, spoke about some of the ironies and dilemmas recon has engendered for them over the years. The key to recon lies in prioritizing: a library can conceivably do everything that needs to be done, but it can't do everything *first*. So monographs are more likely to be converted before serials, Roman-alphabet works before Hebrew. At JTS, for example, circulated books receive faster recon attention — a self-fulfilling prophecy, since those books already accessed by students receive better access, while the undiscovered titles remain undiscoverable!

Mr. Miller also expounded upon the "easiest, fastest, cheapest" philosophy and some of its pitfalls: the sacrifice of quality for the sake of speed, the dependency on grant funding and the disruptive need for professional staff involvement in recon, to train, supervise, or even pitch in when needed. But for all of its inconveniences, he asserted, retrospective conversion is necessary for the sake of access, and is definitely worth the trouble. ☺

MAZEL TOV!

Rabbi Clifford Miller, grandson Yehzekel Akiva
Tzivia Atik, grandson Eitan Eliav
Susan (Shaindy) Kurzmman, grandson Shmuel
Yael Penkower, granddaughter, Tiferet Leah
Edith Lubetski, on the engagement of son Saul to Rebecca Pine.

CONDOLENCES

Vivian Moskowitz, son David Mordechai
Sharon Hammer, father Yissachar Dov Rotter
Susan (Shaindy) Kurzmman, mother xxxxx
Zalman Alpert, mother Shaina
Bella Haas Weinberg, mother Roza Haas
Joyce Levine, mother Norma Abramowitz
Miriam Meiri, husband Meir
May they be comforted among the mourners of Zion.

CONGRATULATIONS!

To our three NYMA scholarship winners:
Elana Gensler, Orii Laudon, Stanley Nachamie.

JOB LISTINGS

Part-time librarian for non-computerized synagogue library located in Manhattan. Four afternoons, Mon-Thurs., collection of approx. 10,000 adult and juvenile English circulating vols. and a small video collection plus English/Hebrew reference section. Active Hebrew school through High school. Paid secular and religious holidays and vacations. Closed summer months. For further information, contact Librarian, Park Avenue Synagogue, 50 E. 87th St., New York, NY 10128; tel (212) 289-4980.

Part-time librarian for non-computerized synagogue library, Temple Beth Abraham, in Tarrytown, NY. Six hours a week, Sun. 9-11 mandatory, remaining 4 hours are flexible. Contact Beulah Tishelman, (914) 631-4688.

Librarian to organize and manage newly reconstructed Ivan Strettenheim Library, of Congregation Emanu-El. Library occupies an entire floor of Temple's Community House and includes 20,000-vol. stack area, computer bank for public Internet access, video viewing room, children's collection and reading area, and spacious reading room. Library services Congregation members as well as members of the general community who participate in programs offered by Congregation. Responsibilities include developing collection, managing the library, coordinating volunteer staff, and organizing special programs for children and adults. Applicant must have MLS; undergraduate degree in Jewish studies or equivalent knowledge of Jewish subjects; 2-3 years' professional experience, including experience in collections development, computer literacy (WWW, information systems); excellent interpersonal communication and organizational skills. Salary commensurate with qualifications and experience; excellent benefits provided. Apply with letter and resume to Dr. Mark W. Weisstuch, Congregation Emanu-El, 1 East 65th Street, New York, NY 10021. Fax applications accepted at 212-570-0826.

"Victory is Ours" The Lubavitcher Library is not only a collection, but a legacy by Hallie Cantor

This article is the sixth in an ongoing series about libraries in the NYMA area.

The Library of Agudas Chassidei Chabad, housed at the Lubavitch World Headquarters in Brooklyn, is, in all respects, a world-class phenomenon. Numbering over 200,000 Hebrew volumes, the collection is known for its rare books, over 2,000 manuscripts, and approximately 100,000 letters and documents from all 7 Chabad Rebbes.

The collection traces its venerable history to the Tzarist Russia and the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, Schneur Zalman of Liadi, who accumulated a few hundred books and manuscripts. But it was the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, who actively expanded the collection in 1928, after fleeing Russia. From his new residence in Riga, Latvia, he transmitted directives to his followers in Israel and the U.S. to amass books, asked authors and publishers to donate copies, and corresponded with book dealers in Yemen, Australia, Africa, France, and Italy.

Over the decades, the library has survived fires, confiscations, and the turbulent years of the Lubavitcher dynasty. During the Nazi occupation a large portion of the collection was lost. R. Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn himself narrowly escaped and emigrated to the U.S., in 1940. Years later, the collection reappeared in Warsaw, and in early 1978 was returned to Chabad headquarters under the 7th Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneersohn ("The Rebbe"), o.b.m.

PUBLIC VIEWING

Formerly the library was open only to the Rebbes, or to people who had obtained personal invitations. But it is now open to the public thanks to the Rebbe, who, after a painful legal battle over the ownership of the books, celebrated the court ruling, immortalized in Lubavitcher history as "*Didan Netzach*, victory is ours." Voweled differently, he explained, the word is *netzach*, eternity. A book is preserved not by being closed off from the world, but rather by being shared with the public for enlightenment.

The library now rests inside 770 Eastern Parkway. Presiding is Rabbi Sholom Dovber Levin, who was appointed head librarian in 1977 and instructed the following year to begin cataloging the collection, a task that took eleven years. In 1988 a special computer program was written in Hebrew, enabling a search according to title, author, subject, year and place of publication, key word and shelf location.

Like his forebears, the Rebbe had called for donations — not only holy but secular, since he maintained that these too can enhance service to G-d. As a result, this has made for an eclectic collection. Clicking *natu*, for example, will summon not only *Natural and the Supernatural Jew*, but *Nature Conservancy!* The catalog is accessible on the Web, at library.chabad.org. But it remains incomplete as it lists only printed books in English or in the Hebrew alphabet.

"We're still in the middle of cataloging books in other languages," assistant Efraim Keller explained. "Someone is working on the German books right now." Others in Persian, Spanish, French, Portuguese, etc. await cataloging and archiving.

Some 12,000 books remain behind in Russia. However, these titles can be accessed over the computer. Wherever the Hebrew letters *kuf*, *lamed* appear under a location code, "that means that this book is located in Russia," Efraim explained. "We don't have them here, but we have a handwritten catalog of everything that is there."

His brother Rabbi Yosef Keller added, "Our library is unique for having the original Russian prints," referring to the Tzarist attempt to crack down on Lubavitcher presses.

RESEARCH MATERIAL

Although most of the letters, manuscripts, and incunabula are stored in closed stacks, they are available for viewing in a public reading room, an airy floor that attracts researchers from all over the world. In addition to Tanach,

Talmud, and *Halachah*, law, publications by the various Chabad leaders line the shelves, for perusal. Writers and scholars come by, needing to obtain information or view a rare, 15th century text.

"We get around 10 researchers a week," says Efraim. "But people come for other reasons, too." He held up a piece of sheet music. Earlier that day, a *chazzan* (cantor) had come in, looking for a certain *niggun*, melody.

Although the library is controlled by Merkos, the Lubavitcher publishing house, it receives materials from everywhere. All are donated, and continually sent in. Ones that arrived from 1988 to 1994 bear a special stamp: *Mivtsa Sefarim: Shenat Hakhel*, 5748, commemorating the year (1988) the Rebbe's library campaign began.

EXHIBITION HALL

The second wing of the library, the Exhibition Hall, is a museum of Chabad history. Some exhibits display texts and artifacts of Chabad Rebbes, such as special editions of the *Tanya* and other major works. Some have celebrated Chabad's historic commitment to outreach. The Rebbe's campaigns of sending emissaries all over the world and building "Chabad Houses" have resulted in lay literature and crafts devoted to Jewish themes — Sabbath, holidays, and "We Want *Moshiach* Now" slogans.

While the "770" library is for research and reference only, a lending library, named Levi Yitzchok and located around the corner, services the general Jewish community. The third and newest annex, Heichal Menachem, located in Borough Park, Brooklyn, services the highly visible Chassidic population with all Chassidic works — Breslav, Gerer, etc. Chabad views the dissemination of Chassidus as a stepping stone to the Messianic era.

Indeed, the Lubavitcher library is testament to the group's resilience and to a vision bearing fruit. Above all, it shows an influence that promises to be around for a very long time. ❖

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NYMA OFFICERS ELECTION BALLOT 1999-2001**1. For the election of the following as Vice-President/President Elect:** Shaindy Kurzman**2. For the election of the following as Recording Secretary:** Elizabeth Stabler**3. For the election of the following as Corresponding Secretary:** Shaindy Kurzman**4. For the election of the following as Treasurer:** Julia Bock

Write-in candidates (specify office) _____

The terms of office are two years. The Vice-President is the President Elect and automatically assumes the office of President at the conclusion of the term as Vice-President.

Naomi Steinberger is the incoming President. She may be reached at:

Tel: 212/678-8982

E-mail: nsteinberger@jtsa.edu**PLEASE SEND BALLOTS TO:****Rita Lifton, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Library, 3080 Broadway, New York, NY 10027**

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