

## When Five Become One New Center for Jewish History Hosts Fall Conference

by Elizabeth F. Stabler  
Librarian, Congregation Emanu-El

Five organizations. Each with its own mission, its own background. All come together to create one entity.

On October 26, 2000, just two weeks after its inauguration, the Center for Jewish History hosted AJL-NYMA's Fall Conference. Located at 15 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Manhattan, the Center is the newborn partnership of five major and disparate institutions of Jewish history, culture, and language: the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum, and the YIVO Institute for Jewish research.

### Shared Room, Shared Concerns

The Reading Room is the heart of the Center, providing access to the institutional partners' archival collections. Resources for researchers working on family history are available at the Genealogy Institute. Galleries and exhibition halls are located on three floors, providing extensive display space. Additional public areas include an auditorium, the Great Hall, a café, and a gift shop.

Conference participants were invited to tour the inaugural displays located on the second floor: Yeshiva University Museum's "From Tent to Temple," the hands-on exhibition for children; "Seeing Ourselves," an exhibit on Jews in the United States, mounted by the American Jewish Historical Society; "German Jewish History in Modern Times, 1600-1945," courtesy of the Leo Baeck Institute; and "YIVO at 75," a celebration of both the opening of the Center and YIVO's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The highlight of the conference was a panel of representatives of the Center's partner organizations. The panel members addressed different aspects of the challenges involved of sharing space, and the solutions.

### All Together Now

The Reading Room is a joint endeavor for all services, Diane Spielman, Public Services Coordinator, pointed

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## From the President

As my final report as President of AJL-NYMA, I would like to thank everyone who has made NYMA, its activities, programs and publications possible. First and foremost I must thank members of the very active NYMA board who have supported the activities of the organization and volunteered their time for numerous tasks, both the glamorous ones to the not so glamorous ones. Working with this board has been truly a privilege, as I constantly learn from its members. Our program chair people, our newsletter editors, our treasurer, our secretaries the former presidents, who serve as the scholarship committee and our public relations chair have all extended themselves.

This past year has brought us stellar programs which you can read about in this newsletter. The newsletter is a wonderful vehicle for exchange of information about ourselves, our programs, and our libraries.

As I leave office I am confident that my colleague Shaindy Kurzman will bring her wisdom and experience to the presidency of NYMA and will continue to enhance the chapter's work as a resource for Judaica librarians in the New York area.

I look forward to joining the group of past-presidents and seeing you all at NYMA events.

*Naomi M. Steinberger*

*AJL-NYMA Chapter President*

### **Attention, Members!**

*AJL-NYMA is starting a mailing list for regional information. If you are interested in joining, please send an e-mail to Sara M. Marcus offlist at [sara@msmarcus.com](mailto:sara@msmarcus.com). Include your name and e-mail address.*

## Metadata, the "Core" Initiative of Cataloging Workshop

by Marcia Goldberg  
Head Cataloger, Tuttleman Library, Gratz College

The AJL-NYMA Cataloging Workshop, co-sponsored by AJL's Institute for Judaica Librarianship and NYMA, was held April 24th at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Approximately forty librarians gathered to hear Lauren Pinsley, OCLC Service Manager for Nylink (formerly the SUNY/OCLC Network) speak on "Understanding the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative." In addition to AJL-NYMA member libraries, Workshop participants represented a range of institutions, among them: the Brooklyn and Queens Borough Public Libraries, the Levy Library of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Pace University Law Library, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

### Pathfinding through DCMI

Ms. Pinsley gave an overview of metadata, the Dublin Core standard and CORC, OCLC's Cooperative Online Resource Catalog. Metadata provides descriptive information about or documentation of other data managed within an application or environment. Examples are a library catalog card or a MARC record. The mission of the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI) is to make it easier to find items on the Internet. We have all looked up various subjects on the Internet only to be inundated with thousands of hits. The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative helps to eliminate much of the confusion and the clutter. CORC is a web-based system used to catalog Internet resources and build pathfinders, or web bibliographies. When we catalog web sites, much as when we catalog books, we are selecting only those sites that we as librarians feel are important to the mission of our libraries.

In cataloging the site, MARC field 856 is added Opening field 856 brings the reader directly to the web site itself, and the web sites cataloged can be added as links to the Library's own web site. In addition, bibliographies can be added to these sites. Because web addresses are in a constant state of change, provisions have been made to check on the integrity of the URL (universal resource locator or web address).

Following Ms. Pinsley's presentation, Sara Spiegel, AJL Institute for Judaica Librarianship and Administrative Librarian for Technical Services, Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, moderated a group discussion about the pros and cons of cataloging web sites. The diversity of the Workshop participants made for a lively give and take on the topic.☆

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## Look What's Happening . . .

### Passage from India

Who says we don't get around?

Rita Lifton, cataloger at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, received this letter to NYMA from halfway around the world:

"I have learnt that Ms. Pinsley will speak about metadata, the Dublin Core standard and CORC, OCLC's Cooperative Online Resource Catalog in the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative workshop on April 24, 2001. I would like to receive an electronic copy of the workshop papers and discussion summary on pros and cons of cataloging Websites, if free of charge. Could you please let me know, if not inconvenient, whether I could get the same via email.

"Look forward to receiving your cooperation from you soon. Thank you.

"Kind regards,

Debasis Ghosh

Executive – Library services

Indian aluminum Company, Limited

Calcutta, India"

How's *that* for long-distance learning?

### Broadening Vision

The Jewish Braille Institute in Manhattan (110 East 30<sup>th</sup> Street, New York 10016), has the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings – the three parts of the Hebrew/Jewish Bible – in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish on audiocassette, available free of charge for anyone who is blind, visually impaired, or learning disabled.

### ALEPH Beta-Tested

The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary is proud to announce its ALEPH 500 system. It can be reached at [www.jtsa.edu/library](http://www.jtsa.edu/library) and click on catalog.

Says Naomi Steinberger, Executive Librarian, "We have worked for many months to set up and configure the system, to train our staff and to develop our web site. We are particularly pleased with the new capabilities of the system which allows us to link bibliographic data to images and other web sites."

You will notice that the search screens are different. However, if you pay attention to the options offered, you should have no difficulty using this system. One major change is the virtual keyboard for Hebrew. When switching to

Hebrew searching a keyboard will appear, and you must use the mouse to type in Hebrew.

Library staff members are available to assist you in using the ALEPH500 system. Do not hesitate to use the "Help" screens; for further assistance contact the "Comment and Questions" to send an e-mail to a librarian.

### "Untraditional" Book Club

Announcing – Traditions, a new book club committed to the finest books available for the Jewish community. Members will find new books by familiar authors such as Anita Diamond, Saul Bellow, and Adin Steinsaltz, as well as classics by Sholem Aleichem and Martin Buber. They will discover compelling new literary voices such as Myla Goldberg, Nathan Englander, and Nomi Eve.

The initial offering will be 3 books for \$3. All those interested in joining will be able to do so through [www.jointraditionsbookclub.com](http://www.jointraditionsbookclub.com). Or, to receive a catalog write to Traditions Book Club, Room 359, 1271 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020.

### News & Jews

The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary has launched its first digital imaging project, with funding from the National Foundation of Jewish Culture.

"News and Jews" contains digitized images of 259 American newspapers from the Abraham and Deborah Karp Collection of Early American Judaica. Spanning the years 1782-1898, they document popular images of Jews in the U.S. and reflect the daily experiences of Jews around the world in the banner headlines of their times. They contain literary musings, humorous anecdotes, and a host of details that illuminate our understanding of Jewish life from the early days of the American Republic through the times of mass migration at the end of the nineteenth century.

To access this site go to [www.catalog.jtsa.edu](http://www.catalog.jtsa.edu) and click on "Enter News About Jews."

### Mazel Tov!

To Micha Oppenheim, on his new granddaughter, Dina Leah, born 1<sup>st</sup> day Shavuot. Parents Rochel and Dovid Brander. May he and his wife Doris *schep* much *nachas*.

To Susan Young, on her new grandson Dovid Aryeh. Parents Lauren and Eli Bacharach. May she and her husband Irving *schep* much *nachas*.

**SPOTLIGHT on Libraries****The Hebrew and Yiddish Collections of Brooklyn Public Library: Meeting Public Demand**

by Yaakov (Jacob) Shulman, Cataloging Dept., Brooklyn Public Library

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

Question: In what "you will never guess where" library can you find the latest in Israeli fiction, *Honi ha-Sakran* (*Curious George*), *Amber Brau'un*, *Uvdot ve-hanagot le-vet Brisk* (*Facts & Customs on Brisk*) or a Yiddish biography of Yigal Allon – and take them all home?

Answer: The Hebrew and Yiddish collection of Brooklyn Public Library.

Let the writer begin with a personal note and response: No, I am not in charge of the "Jewish Division" of the library, for the simple reason that there is no such section. Neither do we have any old and rare manuscripts. However, since becoming the Hebrew/Yiddish cataloger three years ago, I am often in contact with the collection and am still pleasantly surprised by its extent.

What do the roughly 10,000 cataloged titles in the BPL consist of? In Hebrew, of approximately 6,400 records, of which about 2,900 are fiction, from Amos Oz to Ram Oren and John Grisham (currently the author with the highest simultaneous circulation); 800 are juvenile-easy (J-E) book titles; 550 are children's fiction titles (131 by Galilah Ron-Feder-Amit alone); and 2,000 Hebrew religious, non-fictional and literature titles.

In Yiddish, the 4,500 titles include over 800 works of fiction and criticism, and some 500 historical works covering World War II and the Soviet Union (Dewey 940.5-947). Of note are: 19 Hebrew cookbooks, 50 *memorbikher* (books commemorating a town or city with a vanished Jewish population), and 74 Yiddish works by "Old-Yishuv-style" Yerushalmi author Menahem Mendl (over 500 copies in 11 branches). Currently the library is adding to the seven volumes of the Hebrew ArtScroll Talmud (41 copies, with 18 in Central). It can be said that there is no collection in the usual sense to support a curriculum or area of study, but rather a wide-ranging general accumulation.

**Library for the Public**

To understand the nature of the holdings, and its emphasis on popular materials instead of research, the key word to remember about Brooklyn Public Library is that it is precisely that, a *public* library. Its goals are reflected somewhat in this excerpt from a recent press release:

"Brooklyn Public Library's . . . Central Library, Business Library, and 58 branch libraries offer free information, programs and computer access to all ages. Reach the Library's catalog and news 24 hours a day at [www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/](http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/)." The library's task as "a leader in traditional and innovative library services which reflect the diverse and dynamic spirit of the people of Brooklyn" is to provide customer service that reflects the changing information interests and needs of the borough.

Almost everything not of a reference nature is placed in circulation and can be reserved for interlibrary loan from any branch. The library's collection development policy has been to provide fiction, audiobooks and videos; popular

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**"The key word to remember about Brooklyn Public Library is that it is precisely that, a public library."**

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reference and non-fiction materials, over 50 Web-based electronic databases, and e-books. Even the Central Library, which does have a more expansive collection than the branches, has undergone weeding of older, seldom-used materials or those in poor condition. It is not a true research library in terms of collecting scholarly materials and documents (with the notable exception of the Brooklyn Collection, a local history collection).

This emphasis on use also drives the acquisition of Hebrew and Yiddish books to

build a diverse, popular collection.

Materials from earlier acquisitions are being currently retained. The main audience for Hebrew is Israeli adults, not only in Midwood and Borough Park but throughout South Brooklyn, while for Yiddish, there is the greatest interest in the Williamsburgh and Brighton Beach communities.

**Central Library & Multilingual Center**

The largest display of books is found in the Multilingual Center (MLC), at the Central Library. In the massive "open-book"-shaped Central Library building, located at the southeast corner of Eastern Parkway and Flatbush Avenue, the Center can be traced immediately to the right of the high-ceilinged lobby "spine." The material is placed alphabetically by language: there are approximately three bookcases of Yiddish books and seven of Hebrew. Children's books are kept in the world-language section of the newly renovated children's room on the opposite side of the building, but young-adult (age 10-15) materials are kept with the adult books.

Audiovisual items, found in the Multimedia Division on the second-floor balcony, are classified by Dewey Decimal, with a language code prefix (HEB, H, YID, Y). In addition, the reference shelves contain a number of encyclopedias and dictionaries, as well as some religious works, such as *Minchat Chinuch*, *Moadim VeZemanim*, and *Mikraot Gedolot*. Residents of the nearby Chassidic community of Crown Heights can be often seen browsing. The MLC librarians, while not usually fluent in Hebrew or Yiddish, try to be helpful.

Many more books are kept in underground closed stacks. These can be retrieved within about ten minutes by checking the OPAC and filling out and submitting a slip to the Call Desk in the center lobby.

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(Center for Jewish History, cont'd)

out. While each organization has its own stack space and classification system, the Reading Room is used by all scholars doing research. This has meant developing mutual policies for Reading Room use – one registration slip, one call slip, and photocopy request for all the groups. In addition to a 3,000-volume open stack reference collection, the Reading Room has in-house cross-training to familiarize staff with all the services. The Center's Genealogy Institute, directed by Rachel Fisher, trains new researchers, leaving the Reading Room to more experienced researchers and professional scholars.

Dr. Lois Kronholm, a strategic planning expert, was hired to facilitate the process. The first effort was forming a joint Public Service Committee. It soon became apparent that additional focus groups were needed, such as the Automation, Collection Development, and Finding Aid Standardizing Committees. Spielman concluded by mentioning the near-term goals: to develop an OPAC program to suit all the partners and one standard for archival practices to be adopted by all involved.

Lyn Slome, Archivist of the American Jewish Historical Society, spoke next. Slome, who works in the Reading Room, addressed the practical aspects of running a shared Reading Room. The partners have had to grapple with issues ranging from public access to periodicals to noise control. Slome reported the constant evolution in how to handle various issues.

Rachel Keegan, Associate Archivist of the American Jewish Historical Society, serves on the Development Collection Committee. To implement the advantages of joining together, the partners have had to work out how to facilitate sharing their resources. Cooperation will allow them to purchase expensive resources they couldn't afford alone. For her report on the partners' holdings Ms. Keegan created a grid showing what was duplicated in the various collections. She concluded by explaining how the enhanced communication among the Center's organizations has led each to examine its holdings in order to write joint collection development policies.

Vivienne Roumani-Denn, head of the American Sephardi Federation, reported that the ASF is collecting and organizing materials with the aim of becoming "the central resource for Sephardi education." The Sephardi Federation functions as a national umbrella group for "everything Sephardi" and works on both a national and international level. In particular, Ms. Roumani-Denn is interested in multimedia materials. She ended with comments on maintaining archival materials, which is a relatively new impetus among the Sephardim.

#### Joint Efforts

Recently the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHRPC) has awarded the Center for Jewish History a \$2 million grant for an integrated collection management and access system. The next speaker, Renate Evers, of the Leo Baeck Institute, spoke about finding aids for this project. Using EAD (Encoded Archival Description), developed from SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language) and XML (Extensible Markup Language), the Center will create a standard for the finding aids used by the four manuscript and archival repositories at the Center.

Supported by the Library of Congress' MARC Standards Office and the Society of American Archivists, this is part of a nationwide

effort to standardize repository and manuscript collection finding aids, traditionally resistant to such efforts. The EAD will be integrated within the Center's cataloging and management systems for the partners' archival, library, and museum holdings. Evers ended by mentioning that the Finding Aids Committee hopes to launch a preliminary version of the system within three years.

The next speaker, Aviva Astrinsky of YIVO, explained how the Center's Joint Automation Committee is working to implement the automation portion of the NHRPC grant. An Information Architecture Consultant has been hired to coordinate the efforts of one museum, three archives, and four libraries, a daunting task at best. The Center expects to have an automation system up and running within two years.

Astrinsky also spoke about the new directions YIVO is taking. No longer concentrating on Eastern Europe alone, the collection development has been reoriented toward the "new Diaspora" of Yiddish speakers. And, in order to fulfill YIVO's 1925 mission statement which also provided for daily life, YIVO is now collecting such items as *Purimspiels* (Purim festivities) and *farbrengenen* (Chassidic gatherings) in Brooklyn. Astrinsky said that YIVO is "reclaiming the present for the sake of the future."

#### Preservation

Closing the presentation was Stanley Bergman, head of Operations of the Preservation and Technical Services Department of YIVO. Mr. Bergman spoke about the monumental tasks both completed and ahead for YIVO and the Center's partners. The conflict between the need to preserve material and the necessity to provide access has resulted in some creative solutions.

YIVO will work with Harvard, which has developed a method to digitize and preserve paper material, and the metadata to provide intellectual access. All the institutions will be expected to adhere to the same standards of use of materials, necessitating training the staff who will in turn train the users. Microfilming has been replaced by preservation quality duplication and scanning onto disk. Mr. Bergman concluded by explaining that all the partners are working very hard together on these issues.

The Conference ended with networking and refreshments in the Great Hall. With a hearty thanks to the hospitality of the Center, NYMA's Fall Conference was a great success. And a special *yasher koach* to Diane Spielman and Aviva Astrinsky for arranging such an informative afternoon. ☆

#### (Brooklyn Public Library, cont'd)

The History-Travel-Religion Division on the second floor has a strong and diverse collection in both the religious and historical Jewish experience, reflecting all its variants. There are especially a number of books about ethics, feminism, current practice, the Holocaust, and Israel, as well as rabbinical works and local history.

#### Brief History

In the distant past, world-language collection development was performed by a "foreign specialist" of the Language/Literature Division. The library increased Yiddish acquisitions in the 1960s. Can you imagine that 30-40 years ago, the most widely circulated

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(Brooklyn Public Library, cont'd)

foreign language in Brooklyn was Yiddish? Some books were bought through Anti-Defamation League director Abe Foxman's father, including the *memorbikher* (memory books) and a number of autographed Yiddish books. Many Mosad ha-Rav Kook and other scholarly publications in the system also date from that period.

In 1997, the Multilingual Center was established to centralize acquisitions for the entire system and establish relationships with vendors worldwide. The Center acquires language-learning tools and world-language books for itself and the branches, and maintains a routing collection that branch librarians select from on a rotating basis. In Hebrew and Yiddish, acquisition priorities nowadays are less towards scholarly works and more towards serving the informational interests of the community. The public's interest in these materials and MLC has led to large increases in the budget for Hebrew and Yiddish books along with those in Spanish, Russian, and Chinese.

#### Catalog & Accessibility

The library's computerized catalog was implemented about fifteen years ago, and the Web-based "GeoWeb" about two years ago. For Hebrew and Yiddish, practically all materials, including "mass-market" paperbacks and children's books, are cataloged. Records are made in Library of Congress romanization only but not in vernacular script. Current cataloging is performed using OCLC as a utility.

While LC standard subject headings are used, these are often added to. Many children's books' records, for example, contain summaries and subjects of the kind usually provided for English books. To consolidate browsing, uniform titles are only included for main entries and the term "juvenile" is no longer retained. As is common in large collections, quite a few holdings have no records or were never linked, and records are awaiting retrospective conversion or deletion; but discrepancies are being steadily eliminated.

The development of the MLC and a simultaneous project to inventory the entire Central Library has engendered some shifting of materials underground; a few items may prove hard to locate. Access should continue to improve as more offline items are linked to records or cataloged, and shelf order is being restored. The collection is becoming more coherent despite the continual staff funding challenge common to most urban public libraries.

#### What Lies Ahead?

Brooklyn Public Library is a great, still somewhat untapped resource for the community. As service evolves, and with a rise in publicity, the opportunity to read a good novel, brush up on Hebrew vocabulary or peruse *sifre kodesh* (rabbinical literature) at home should be enhanced. Many trips to Manhattan might be saved. Much depends on: the continuing involvement of the Multilingual Center, alleviation of a staffing shortage in city-funded libraries, and most importantly, the continued interest of the public-at-large. ☆

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