

## **The Real & the Virtual A Library Displays its Treasures** by **LIZA STABLER** Librarian, Congregation Emanu-El

On Thursday, Dec. 13, 2001, AJL-NYMA launched its new year with the fall conference, "Creating Library Exhibits, Real and Virtual," held at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Inspired by the Library's current exhibit, *Micrography: The Hebrew Word as Art*, the conference provided the opportunity for NYMA librarians to learn more about using their libraries' resources to mount exhibits, both in the library and on the Web.

NYMA's new president, Shaindy Kurzmann, welcomed all and thanked Naomi Steinberger, who completed her term as president last June. She also introduced the speakers: Sharon Liberman Mintz, Curator of Jewish Art, Jewish Theological Seminary; and Naomi Steinberger, Executive Librarian, Jewish Theological Seminary.

### **Museum Piece**

Sharon Liberman Mintz, whose specialty is medieval Hebrew illustrated manuscripts, addressed two general topics: the Seminary's curatorial philosophy and methods, and the micrography exhibit in particular. Mintz's mandate is to create what she termed a "Museum of the Hebrew Book," drawing on the im-

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## *From the (New) President*

Just over four months ago, the horrific events of Sept. 11, 2001 profoundly changed our lives and perspectives, both as Americans and as Jews. Several of our members were directly affected by the tragedy, especially those who work at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in lower Manhattan, just blocks away from where terror struck. Our first board meeting of the year had been scheduled for that day, but was, fortunately, switched to Monday, Sept. 10. What a sad, dramatic difference a day made. Our hearts are with all of those who suffered such tremendous losses in our area, in Washington, D.C., and in Pennsylvania.

This fall, I took over the AJL-NYMA presidency from the very capable hands of Naomi Steinberger. Together with all of you, I thank Naomi for the two exemplary years of her leadership. Notwithstanding her weighty responsibilities as Executive Librarian at the Jewish Theological Seminary, she oversaw the excellent programming that consistently informed and inspired our members. Many thanks are also due to the concerted efforts of all the members of the Executive Board.

Among our Executive Board's newer members are Roz Friedman, Sara Marcus, Marlene Schiffman, and Chaya Wiesman. Roz, librarian at Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls in Teaneck, New Jersey, joins Elana Gensler as Day School/High School Workshop Coordinator. Sara is our new Reference Workshop Coordinator; Chaya, librarian at the Ramaz Upper School Library, has assumed the responsibilities of Corresponding Secretary. Our newest board member, Marlene Schiffman, Judaica Cataloger at Yeshiva University, will be coordinating the Cataloging Workshop. I look forward to working together with these, our new members, as well as with all of the Executive Board members of long standing.

I am also pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself. I first joined AJL-NYMA in 1984, when I became a Judaica cataloger at the Mendel Gottesman Library of Yeshiva University. I then served on the AJL-NYMA Board as Corresponding Secretary and as Vice-President/ President-Elect while working as librarian of the Touro College Women's Division. One and a half years ago, I joined the reference team at the George T. Potter Library of Ramapo College, the public liberal arts college of New Jersey. Retaining and strengthening my association with AJL-NYMA has been most helpful, affording me access to the resources of Judaic collections and the expertise of Judaica librarians here in the New York area. I also greatly value the friendship and camaraderie of our AJL-NYMA members.

Our programming year has already begun with the exciting and successful Fall Conference, *Creating Library Exhibits, Real and Virtual*, held in December at the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York. The speakers, Sharon Liberman Mintz and our own Naomi Steinberger, were superb. They set the high standards that we hope all of our workshops and conferences will meet.

Please contact me to share your thoughts and suggestions on how to make this a most productive year for all of us at AJL-NYMA. I look forward to meeting all of you at our future programs.

*Shaindy (Susan) Kurzmann*

## Tour de Force, Tour of Beauty Spring at Congregation Emanu-El

Even an old New Yorker can unexpectedly discover new places of peace and beauty here in the city. So it was for some of us on June 13, 2001, when AJL-NYMA sponsored its spring program at Congregation Emanu-El.

Approximately 25 guests were introduced to the synagogue's history, architecture, museum, and library, represented by four informed and enthusiastic people: Reva Kirschberg, the synagogue's historian and archivist; Mark Heutlinger, its administrator; Elka Deitsch, its museum curator; and Elizabeth Stabler, its librarian. Ms. Stabler was also the coordinator of the afternoon program.

Among the highlights of the tour were the Tiffany windows; the great, vaulting main chapel (the synagogue second in seating capacity only to the one in Budapest); the wedding dress from Fez; the illuminated *ketubot* (many courtesy of the Jewish Theological Seminary collection); and the *piece de resistance*: the recently refurbished, wood-paneled, and new-smelling library. Ms. Stabler gave the NYMA folks a tour through the open stacks of Judaica, the state-of-the-art computers, and the comfortable, and highly inviting chairs.

According to its historian, Emanu-El, which abuts Central Park, was consciously designed as a quiet, Jewish retreat in a noisy, commercial city. Certainly it has lived up to its designer's dream. Elegant and imposing, Emanu-El will please the most jaded city-goer.

## So Many Websites, So Little Time Finding Reference Resources on the Web Spotlight of Winter Workshop

These days, when a library without the Web is going by way of the horse and buggy, the question of how to choose the right Website can be a "virtual" headache. Take an extra measure of Webpages for the Judaica librarian and you can get a "virtual" nightmare.

Finding the right database was explored in "Reference in the Digital Age: Perspectives on Reference Resources on the Web for Judaica Libraries," the reference workshop held January 31, 2001, at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

The presenters – Sara Marcus, Librarian at Yeshiva University High School for Girls; and Odelia Levanovsky, Administrative Librarian for Public Services at The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America – spoke on the process of selecting Websites as a part of the library's general resources.

Deciding on the Webpage demands some preliminary brainstorming. The basic question must be asked: What constitutes a valuable site? Using her own library as an example, Ms. Levanovsky cited some of the criteria: Who is responsible for the site? Is it

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## Look What's Happening . . . .

### Up & Running

The YIVO Library Website is now up and running:

[http://www.cjh.org/about/yivo\\_catalog.html](http://www.cjh.org/about/yivo_catalog.html)

The catalog includes approximately 50,000 records of books in Yiddish, Hebrew, English, and other West and East European languages. Currently, all non-Latin script records are in Romanized forms only.

### Alive & Kicking

While all of New York City, as well as the nation, mourns the recent devastating attacks, the area near the World Trade Center has been affected the most. Fortunately, the Museum of Jewish Heritage, located in Battery Park, suffered minimal damage.

According to a letter released by the Communication Department (and sent to NYMA courtesy of Julia Bock, Museum librarian), "The Museum, as well as our collection of artifacts, is in good condition. The Museum will, however, require some repairs to its ventilation systems, as well as an extensive cleaning, before we are able to open to the public again." The Museum reopened October 5, although the public programs scheduled during that time had been cancelled.

The letter continued, "While the brutality of September 11 will certainly resonate with us for all time, we at the Museum are nurtured and strengthened by our commitment to our mission of education and remembrance, and are determined – perhaps more than ever – to bring our message of memory and hope to our community, our nation, and our world."

### Coming Soon

Cataloging Workshop, March. Check for details.

Day School/High School Workshop, May 7.

"Giving Credit Where Credit is Due:

How to Detect & Prevent Plagiarism."

Hands-on PowerPoint Instruction.

Spring Conference, June.

### Mazel Tov!

To Shulamith Cohen, on the birth of her granddaughter Ashleigh Tzvia Cohen. Parents Yehuda and Lisa Cohen.

To Avraham & Tzivia Atik, on the marriage of their son David to Riva Atlas.

To Liza Stabler, on the engagement of her daughter Carolyn Aviva Schaeffer to Darren O'Dowd.

To Micha and Doris Oppenheim, on the birth of their granddaughter, Sorah Dina. Parents Nechama & Yosi Edelstein.

May they all *schep nachas*.

### Congratulations

To Hallie (Chaya Sarah) Cantor, on the latest book she edited: *Siddur Tehillat Hashem*, published by Otsar Sifrei Lubavitch.

### Tsetkhem le-shalom

To Monty & Yael Penkower, who are making *aliyah* this summer.

### Heartfelt Condolences

To Mrs. Edith Degani & family, upon the loss of her daughter Vivian.

To Odelia Levanovsky, on the passing of her mother Helga Silver.

May they be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

Comments? Ideas? Suggestions?  
Or professional news about yourself?  
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## WOMAN OF VALOR

Esther Nussbaum Receives AJL Award for Distinguished Service

by HALLIE CANTOR, Acquisitions, Hedi Steinberg Library, Yeshiva University

*In June 2001, one of NYMA's own, Esther Nussbaum, librarian of Ramaz Upper School, was chosen to receive the National AJL Life Membership Award for Distinguished Service. She is one of the fewer than ten individuals to be honored with the most prestigious award granted to a member of this organization.*

*Member for 22 years of AJL and founding member of the NYMA chapter, Esther also edits Jewish Book World, a publication of the Jewish Book Council. Esther has continually dedicated herself to the furtherance of Judaica librarianship. She has graciously allowed for this interview.*

**NYMA:** Congratulations. How long have you been involved with AJL?

**EN:** I've been a member of AJL since 1979-1980, and have been attending national conventions since then. I was one of the founding members of NYMA. Edith Lubetski [of Stern College for Women] was the

founding president. In fact, she and I co-chaired the National AJL Convention that was held in NYC back in 1993. Everyone on the NYMA board at the time was involved. The convention required 2 years of planning and resulted in a hugely successful convention, in spite of the last-minute crisis caused by the first World Trade Center bombing.



Esther Nussbaum (left) at AJL Convention in San Diego, June 2001. With her is fellow NYMA member Marion Stein, presenting the National AJL Life Membership Award for Distinguished Service.

**NYMA:** What made you start NYMA?

**EN:** At the time we were mandated by the national organization to start local chapters.

**NYMA:** The programs at NYMA have certainly been impressive. Other chapters have admired us, and several of their members attended some of our own programs.

**EN:** Well, we have wonderful resources to offer, both institutional and human. We have JTSA, YU, HUC [Jewish Theological Seminary, Yeshiva University, Hebrew Union College] and the many special collection libraries such as the New York Public Jewish Division and YIVO. People attend from the entire Northeast region. Many of the NYMA librarians are experts in their areas of specialization. Librarians come become it's important for networking, for contributing to their own professional development.

**NYMA:** Have we ever done anything jointly with other branches?

**EN:** I'm not sure about all the activities of NYMA, but frequently the day school workshops have been joint efforts with the New Jersey and Long Island chapters.

**NYMA:** What got you started in librarianship?

**EN:** I had received a Master's degree at NYU in English. In the early 70s I decided to go back to school, before my youngest child was born. I decided to go to Columbia University Library School [now no longer in existence]. I finished with my M.L.S. degree and certification both as a biomedical librarian and as a junior and senior high librarian. Then I worked for two years as librarian at Beekman Downtown Hospital [now a division of NYU].

**NYMA:** What attracted you to medical librarianship?

**EN:** Well, my husband and brother are doctors. I knew the literature. At library school, I was introduced to computer searching in biomedical communications. I had a wonderful position at the hospital, but when I was invited to take a position at Ramaz, I agreed, since my children were attending Ramaz, I already had a teaching license [teacher of library], and I would have the same holidays as my children! I started at Ramaz in 1978 and have never regretted my decision.

**NYMA:** You must have seen a lot of changes at Ramaz.

**EN:** I introduced the Ramaz library to computers early on, in 1983 to be exact. Now we're completely automated and on the internet. Librarianship is a profession that's constantly evolving and interesting. Audiovisuals have

gone from 16mm film and filmstrips to video and DVD.

**NYMA:** How did you get started in Judaica librarianship?

**EN:** I had an ongoing interest in Jewish history, Jewish art, and religion. I had a yeshiva background, and was familiar with the texts, so getting involved with a Hebrew collection was not a problem; and I learned a lot at AJL and NYMA conferences and convention sessions.

**NYMA:** What do you see is the future of librarianship? For example, do you think much of a librarian's role is being replaced by automation?

**EN:** Don't listen to the scary stories. I think the service provided by librarians will always be needed. I think that Judaica librarians will always be needed for specialized texts. And students will need librarians for selection and guidance.

**NYMA:** Do you see the nature of libraries changing – for example, more as a repository of information, rather than just a place to read and store books?

**EN:** Librarianship is definitely information science now. There's so much information. Part of a librarian's job is select and authenticate.

**NYMA:** Do you see books being replaced by computers?

**EN:** I'm not Nostradamus, so I don't predict the future. I see reference works being replaced already, but not monographs.

**NYMA:** You're certainly involved in many things, the *Jewish Book World*, for example. How long have you been involved with that?

**EN:** I've been editing the *JBW* since 1994. It gives me the opportunity to combine writing with my interest in art and books. I've been writing on Jewish art since the 1970s. I was a frequent contributor to *AMIT*, the magazine of AMIT Women's Organization.

**NYMA:** What future activities would you like to see for AJL and NYMA?

**EN:** Basically to concentrate on high standards professionally. We must recruit people to our profession in order to fill the specialized needs of our collections. AJL and NYMA must be able to instruct and network to our members and keep everyone informed of the advances in the library field which apply to our work.

**NYMA:** And what are your own, personal goals?

**EN:** To continue to give my best efforts to my profession. It has been extremely rewarding. ☆

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pressive collection of the Seminary's Rare Book Room.

By showcasing the library's collection, she hopes to promote the library's material and "to add to the canon of Jewish art," a subject not much treated in the literature. An upcoming exhibit will feature Hebrew and Italian wedding riddles and poems, a little known genre about which only one book by Dan Pagis exists. Not until the virtual Web exhibit for *Micrography: The Hebrew Word as Art* was launched did Nanette Stahl, Yale's Judaica Librarian, discover that Yale held a sister to one of the exhibit's prints.

The Seminary mounts three exhibits a year, two smaller ones and a third, major exhibit, using all the library's display capabilities. Soon additional display space will be available in the newly renovated Tower's base. Mintz has been responsible for 27 exhibits and nine printed catalogs. While some exhibits are designed for the general audience, such as last year's *From This World to the Next: Jewish Approaches to Illness, Death & the Afterlife*, others, such as *Scripture and Schism: Samaritan and Karaite Treasures*, are intended for a more erudite public.

When planning a display, Mintz has practical issues: Does the object have aesthetic qualities? Is it visually appealing? Does it fit in any of the cases? Putting an object on display is a great opportunity to conserve it, but it must not be too fragile. Usually her preliminary object list is five to eight times the amount of what will finally be displayed.

In the initial planning stages, Mintz goes through the Rare Book Room collection carefully, as not all its holdings are yet cataloged for their visual content. As Mintz selects objects she also conducts extensive research, both in the library and on the internet. Copyright issues can and do arise: for example, there might be two copies of a single print, each with a different signature.

Putting together an exhibit includes many physical details: writing labels, book mounts, mattes for prints, and lighting. Mintz works with the Seminary's Friends of the Library group when producing a printed catalog. If none is planned, she must consider what handouts to provide. Publicity must be designed and feedback obtained. Each exhibit is mounted for up to four months. As to the installation itself, Mintz hires

professional exhibit designers who require 4-7 days for the task. The costs of mounting exhibits range from the low thousands to not more than \$10,000. It is possible for the exhibits, if requested, to tour. However, this has not been a priority consideration.

### Writing History

*Micrography: The Hebrew Word as Art* began with a recognition that the Seminary had some great examples of the genre in its collection, and that, simply, there had been no recent exhibit on the subject. Micrography is an art form which developed about 1,000 years ago in Egypt as a response to the Islamic prohibition on representational art. It was quickly adopted by Middle Eastern Jews and first appears in German Bible codices, 1300 C.E. While Ashkenazic artists emphasized the initial word, Yemenite Jews favored the carpet page at the beginning of a book or section.

Micrography was used extensively in manuscripts. After the advent of printing it was more commonly used for decorative pieces and wall hangings. Many of the micrographs have dedications and seem to have been used in fund-raising, either as incentives to give or as thank yous for donors.

In researching the collection, Mintz went through the Library's collection of 4,000 postcards and discovered some amazing nineteenth-century micrographic picture postcards of famous rabbis of France. Another micrograph turned up while an eighteenth-century manuscript was being cataloged. Because so much of the nineteenth-century material was printed on poor quality paper, much of what Mintz selected required extensive conservation. Mintz ended her presentation with a gracious invitation to view the exhibit.

### Digital Past & Future

Naomi Steinberger followed with a presentation of JTS's current and projected digital collections. Showing examples, she discussed what material the Seminary has decided to digitize and how it goes about doing this.

The Seminary's digital collection project encompasses full-text databases, image databases, archival finding aids, and virtual exhibitions.

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Digitizing collections provides access from anywhere in the world at any time. Digitizing also serves to preserve fragile material by limiting physical contact with deteriorating objects, while the technology makes material more legible.

All digitizing projects begin by cataloging the item in MARC21 format. Next, the item is scanned and converted to .jpg format in 300 dpi. Keeping the resolution low prevents unauthorized copying and theft. The data is then loaded onto the Seminary's Aleph 500 Web-based client server. Using the 856 MARC tag and a unique identifier, links are created to an external file. Access is provided via the Library's automation system's Web search engine.

The Seminary has three full-text data bases. *News about Jews* is a digitized collection of newspaper articles from 1782 to 1898 about Jewish life. Its 350 articles deal with commerce, social welfare, religious life and social life. Steinberger displayed an article about the opening of Temple Emanu-El's 43<sup>rd</sup> Street location, in 1868.

Articles are individually catalogued with a URL in the 856 MARC field. Images are scanned and linked to the text. Searches are conducted by keyword. Steinberger is the Project Director and Amy Helfman is the Web Developer. Funding was provided by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, and consultation is provided by Columbia University's Department of Preservation.

*Judaica Americana*, a digitized collection of 100 pamphlets, will be up and running shortly. Steinberger showed *Sabbath or Sunday?*, an example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century American pamphlet in the collection. Still in the preliminary stages is the *Yerushalemski Collection*, being done in

collaboration with the Seminary's Schocken Library. Yerushalemski was a nineteenth-century Polish rabbi who wrote many responsa. Some of the material was scanned before it was catalogued, so that work is now being done. Steinberger also mentioned plans to create an Electronic Reserve collection, so that students can access everything put on reserve via any computer with internet access. Still to be worked out are security and copyright issues.

Image databases include *Biblical Prints* and *The Zucker Family Ketubah Collection*. The *Biblical Prints*, available this winter, will provide access to a wide variety of images with biblical themes, from rare manuscripts to children's books. The first of the finding aids will be used for the musical archives.

The world of digitizing text and images is quickly evolving. Steinberger is examining whether to migrate from MARC format to XML or EAL for digitization projects. The Seminary hopes to acquire a new, book-friendly scanner with cradles which will allow items to be scanned from above. All these projects depend on funding, which is sought from the government, foundations and individuals. Steinberger ended her talk with a display of the virtual exhibitions, the Web versions of Mintz's tangible work with the Museum of the Jewish Book.

Naomi Steinberger powerfully showed how the Web is making libraries' treasures accessible to all, breaking down the barriers of time and space. Both Mintz and Steinberger are continuing in the best tradition of libraries and librarians, as they take materials off the shelf to put into users' hands, whether in showcase or in cyberspace. ☆

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scholarly? Is it informative? How often is it updated?

Objectives must be considered. As an academic institution, JTS Library strives to provide a scholarly, informative and useful additional source for academic research. At the same time, it must create a unique selection typifying the JTS Library collection. Once done, it must become a part of other university/institutional links.

Faculty involvement plays a large part in the selection of Webpages. Professors need selections that are related to the courses offered, and incorporate selections as part of Library tutorials for specific classes. Indirectly, the Web, rather than diminishing, has enhanced the library's role within the academic institution.

Several examples were presented of various Webpages, as well as a handout of useful Websites: The New York Public

Library, at [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org), and the Queens Borough Public Library, at [www.queenslibrary.org](http://www.queenslibrary.org). Online reference tools are also available, such as *Encyclopedia Britannica* ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)) or Online Dictionary and Thesaurus ([www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com)).

The presenters closed with a few tips on the art of developing resources:

- \* Join discussion groups.
- \* Attend seminars and workshop.
- \* Ask for feedback from patrons
- \* Visit other libraries (not virtually), and attend their own tutorials.
- \* Maintain your own Website, and periodically check recent updates and links.

Who knows? Perhaps in the future, a library without a Webpage or a Webmaster will seem quite out of date. ☆