

Drawing the Line

Censorship Highlight

@ Fall Conference

by ELIZABETH F. STABLER

Librarian, Ivan M. Stettenheim Library,
Congregation Emanu-El

The Fall 2005 Conference "Censorship and Self-Censorship: Drawing the Red Lines," held Sept. 19th at the South Court Auditorium of the New York Public Library, launched NYMA's programming year with an incisive look at a controversial and vital topic. Organized by NYMA's new president, Marlene Schiffman, the conference featured Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch on "Intra-Jewish Dialogue: Problems and Perspectives" and Professor Marc B. Shapiro on "Orthodoxy and Censorship."

After the congenial registration period, allowing attendees a chance to network with colleagues and greet old chums, Marlene Schiffman welcomed everyone. She began with a brief *derash* (homily), reminding us that *Moshe Rabbenu* was denied entrance into the Promised Land because of *lashon harah* (gossip). Custom has informed the writing of Jewish history because sometimes unpleasant truths have been ignored in an effort to avoid doing harm. There is a dialectic between what we must tolerate and what we must guard against. In this context, Marlene concluded, it is important to understand censorship, its causes and consequences.

Parallel Lines That Meet

The first speaker was Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, Senior Rabbi of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, and co-author, with Rabbi Yaakov Yosef Reinman, of *One People, Two Worlds: An Orthodox Rabbi and a Reform Rabbi Explore the Issues That Divide Them*. Even 3 years after its publication, Hirsch remarked, "The hullabaloo is still simmering."

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A Few Words

This year started off with a very well-attended program, the Fall Conference, held September 19th at the New York Public Library. The program was entitled "Censorship and Self-Censorship: Drawing the Red Lines," and our featured speakers were Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch on "Intra-Jewish Dialogue: Problems and Perspectives" and Professor Marc B. Shapiro on "Orthodoxy and Censorship." A lively debate ensued during the audience question-and-answer period.

Our Cataloging Workshop was held November 21st at the Jewish Theological Seminary and chaired by our able Steven Bernstein. Both speakers, Sara Spiegel and Matthew Beacom, encouraged comment and questions from the audience, even to the point where time was running out. We had to stop in order to attend the stimulating tour of the current JTS exhibit "First Impressions: Hebrew Printing in the Fifteenth Century," given by the JTS staff. We are grateful for Steven for having planned such an excellent and well-received program.

Steven has shown his talent in another way as well: he is designing our website. The NYMA website will soon describe our mission, activities, and up-and-coming programs and be linked with other activities and/or Websites of interest to our members. A prototype is already on the Web for our viewing. Steven would love to receive comments and suggestions.

The Day School/High School Workshop is being planned for April by Leslie Monchar and Roz Friedman, our capable Coordinators. It will feature two talks, one on the relationships between the librarian and the faculty and the librarian and the school administration, and how to foster strong, positive relationships; and the other on orientation activities and programs.

The Spring Conference in May will feature a description of the Center for Online Judaic Studies, a program that seeks to "democratize" Jewish studies by putting many opportunities to learn on the Web. We will be treated to "Digitizing History: The Future of the Past: A Multimedia Presentation" that will be relevant to school libraries as well as research libraries, museums, and archives.

We welcome you to our dynamic programs which have already attracted a diverse group of non-AJL members of the wider library community. May I express my gratitude to the members of the Board who have so helpfully suggested truly creative programming and so diligently carried it out. I hope to see you at the next event.

Marlene Schiffman
President, AJL-NYMA

Ground Rules

Training Do's & Don'ts

@ Fall Cataloging Workshop

By RITA LIFTON Cataloger,

Jewish Theological Seminary of America Library

In a world full of library catalogers, a uniform system might be essential. What are the standards and procedures of a library, and how can they be disseminated? This was the topic of NYMA's Fall Cataloging Workshop, "Rules and Documentation," held on November 21, 2005, at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary and coordinated by Steven Bernstein, Goldsmith Catalog Librarian, JTS.

The first speaker, Sara Spiegel, Administrative Librarian for Technical Services, Jewish Theological Seminary, discussed "Creating Documentation as a Tool for Training and Communication." Ms. Spiegel explained how a cataloging department should go about planning, collecting and disseminating material which could then be used to train new employees as well as inform other cataloging departments.

The JTS Technical Services Wiki is a case in point. While still a work in progress, this documentation project, utilizing web technology software, was created as a means of making documentation relating to procedures and decisions of the JTS Cataloging Department available online. Ms. Spiegel's talk has wide application: the lessons learned are not limited to cataloging but can be implemented in all library departments as well as in non-library settings.

The second half of the program, "After AACR2—RDA: Resource Description and Access," was presented by Matthew Beacom, Catalog Librarian for Networked Information, Yale University, and Chair, RDA Updates Forum Taskforce. Mr. Beacom began his presentation by asking – why not just keep revising AACR2 rather than develop a new standard? – thereby anticipating a question that was on the minds of many of the catalogers in attendance.

One answer is that while AACR2 is print-based and retains many concepts and terminology from a card catalog environment, RDA was created for a world increasingly geared to the Internet and offers an opportunity to create a cataloging code compatible with new metadata initiatives. Mr. Beacom went on to give a complete overview of the RDA standard which is being developed by the Joint Steering Committee for Revision of AACR (JSC), www.collectionscanada.ca/jsc. The RDA is being published in sections, each with its own projected publication date. The tentative date for the final version is 2008.

Following the workshop, attendees were invited to a tour of the exhibition "First Impressions: Hebrew Printing in the Fifteenth Century," led by curators Sharon Liberman Mintz and David Sclar. Selections from the exhibition can be viewed at www.jtsa.edu/library/exhib. ■

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Cataloging Workshop Developer

Steven Bernstein, 212-678-8044; sbernstein@jtsa.edu

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Day/High School Workshop

Roz Friedman, 201-833-4307; ramer1492@aol.com
Leslie Monchar, 973-597-1115 x1120; lmonchar@jcha.org

Newsletter

Hallie Cantor, 212-340-7723; hccantor@yu.edu;
cantorbk@msn.com

Publicity Coordinator (& Past President)

Rita Lifton, 212-678-8092; rlifton@jtsa.edu

Reference Workshop Coordinators

Rachail Kurtz, 718-432-8285, x117; rachailku@flatbush.org
Ina Cohen, 212-678-8836; incohen@jtsa.edu

Liaison to Yeshiva Librarians/Cluster Group

Joyce Levine, 516-487-9204; jlevine@hotmail.com

Moderator

Sara Marcus, 718-464-6534; sara@msmarcus.com

Graphics (& Past President)

Shandy (Susan) Kurzmann, 201-684-7199;
skurzmann@ramapo.edu; sbk36@att.net

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establer@emanuelnyc.org
Naomi Steinberger, 212-678-8982; nsteinberger@jtsa.edu
Shulamith Berger, 212-960-5451; sberger@yu.edu

Committee chairs are not elected officers. We welcome volunteers; please contact the committee chairs. NYMA News is published twice a year, Spring/Summer & Fall/Winter, by the AJL-NYMA Committee. For questions or comments, contact Hallie Cantor, 383 Kingston Ave., #81, Brooklyn, NY 11213, or e-mail above.

Past/Present/Future

Announcing – Convention Stipends

Look for announcements for the next national AJL Convention. The Association of Jewish Libraries will be holding its 41st convention in Cambridge, MA, on June 18-21, 2006. Librarians, archivists and scholars from numerous disciplines will meet to share their interests in Judaica librarianship and related areas. Hope to see you there! For those who are interested in attending and are finding it financially difficult, NYMA and National AJL offer stipends. Grant applications for AJL are due by March 31st. Consult the AJL Website at www.jewishlibraries.org for applications. NYMA scholarships will be announced shortly.

Coming Soon

Day School Workshop, April 26th, at Ramaz.
Reference Workshop, in March 21st, at JTS.

Topics: Rabbinic Reference; Electronic Resources.
Spring Conference, May 18th, at NYU.

Up & Running (Almost)

NYMA's website is nearly on its way. Designed by STEVEN BERNSTEIN, the site can be viewed at www.thebernsteinfamily.net/NYMA. Comments and feedback are welcome.

Write Path

Once again, Jewish writers, editors, and illustrators whipped out their laptops and converged at the 92nd St. Y for the ninth annual Jewish Children's Book Writers' Conference, held Sun., Nov. 20th, and co-hosted by STEVE SIEGEL of the 92nd St. Y's Bottenwieser Library. Topics included the changing landscape of American Jewry, Israeli juvenile literature, and critiques of various manuscripts.

Einstein Reappears

Albert Einstein Exhibit on at the Mendel Gottesman Library, Yeshiva University, fourth floor. Compiled by YU archivist SHULI BERGER, the exhibit features materials highlighting Einstein's special relationship with YU. The Exhibit can also be accessed online at http://www.yu.edu/libraries/digital_library/einstein/pa nel1.html.

Lecture Circuits

Temple Emanu-El's "Meet the Author" series was launched Wed., Nov. 16th, through "An Evening of Contemporary Israeli Literature with Savyon Liebrecht," sponsored jointly by the Ivan M. Stettenheim Library and the Bernard Museum of Judaica and hosted by LIZA STABLER.

Upcoming lecture series include:

Feb. 22, 2006: Hebrew Printing in Poland:

A Brief History. Speaker BRAD SABIN-HILL.

March 28: What IS It About Jews and Food?

April 25: The Jews of Sing-Sing

May 17: Stars of David: Prominent Jews Talk
About Being Jewish

All lectures take place at 6:30 p.m., 1 East 65th St., (between 5th and Madison Avenues), New York, NY 10021. RSVP: (212) 744-1400, x362. Free admission.

JTS Exhibition

"The Prato Haggadah: an Illuminated Medieval Manuscript in the Making." April 7 to July 7, 2006.

Happy 100th!

Centenary of Henry Roth, author of *Call it Sleep*, was held Tues., Feb. 7, 2006, at the New York Public Library. Hosted by MICHAEL TERRY, celebrations included readings of selected passages, panel discussions by noted scholars, and Professor Steven Kellman's presentation of his *Life of Henry Roth*. The Centenary Celebration was co-sponsored by City College of New York, the American Jewish Historical Society, the Dorothea Division of the New York Public Library, and Lawrence I. Fox, Trustee, the Henry Roth Literary Property Trust.

Take a Bow

MARLENE SCHIFFMAN, together with husband Dr. Lawrence Schiffman, will be honored February 26th with a Humanitarian Award at the Annual Dinner of PTACH, the yeshiva dedicated to children with special needs.

LESLIE MONCHAR, together with husband Philip, was honored Feb. 13th at the Tu-B'Shvat dinner of Chabad Center of Northwest New Jersey.

HALLIE (CHAYAH SARAH) CANTOR has edited book three of Rabbi Riddle series, *Look Who Dropped in for Yom Tov!*, published by Shazak Unlimited.

Distributor: Israel Bookshop.

SHELLY FEIT was honored Feb. 11th with the Rabbi J. Shelley Applebaum Service Award at the Moriah School in Englewood, NJ, where she has served as the librarian/media specialist for the past 22 years.

Mazel Tovs

To EDITH LUBETSKI, on the birth of her grandson Yaakov. Parents Uriel and Shani Lubetski.

To INA COHEN, on the engagement of her daughter Rachel to Yoni Ratzersdorfer.

May they all *schep nachas*.

Condolences

To BINA WAGNER, on the loss of her husband, Rabbi Feivel Wagner. May she be comforted among the mourners of Zion in Jerusalem.

High Note & Winning Streak

"Roll" of Technology @ March 2005 Cataloging Workshop

By STANLEY NACHAMIE

A lot happens in eleven years. Systems upgrade -- or fail. Technology changes -- or dies. Holdings get added -- or stuck in limbo. All these can make or break a library. Does luck lie in how you play it?

This "chance" meeting of the old and the new was the subject of the March 2005 Cataloging Workshop, held Tuesday morning, March 15th, at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). Panelists and audience discussed the "revival" of an old database, and the "arrival" of a new service.

Striking the Right Chord

Immediately following the introduction, the workshop was dedicated to the memory of Marcia Goldberg, who had passed away last February. This was a fitting vehicle for a memorial, since Marcia had formerly served as NYMA Cataloging Workshop Coordinator, even after leaving the New York area to work at Gratz College in Philadelphia.

The first presentation, "*Tehiyat ha-Metim: The Death and Rebirth of a Music Database*," was given by Philip Miller, Head Librarian of the New York HUC-JIR. He actually introduced his presentation as "'Part II,' a continuation of one given by Suzanne Stauffer, back in 1994, or thereabouts." He described how, at that time, his library was in the process of organizing its extensive collection of liturgical sheet music and cataloging it into a DataPerfect database, on an old 286 computer dedicated to this database.

However, one day in 1998, the hard drive on the 286, self-destructed, and although back-up diskettes were found, all efforts to recover the data on those diskettes failed. They decided it was necessary to start the inputting all over again, doing minimal level cataloging in RLIN (the Research Libraries Information Network) and downloading the records to VTLS (Visionary Technology in Library Solutions), but that job got put on the back burner.

Imagine their surprise when in 2004 they discovered that after the HUC system had migrated to Virtua (the new name for VTLS's integrated library system), "a vast quantity of the sheet music in our collection was already in [the] Cincinnati [HUC library], and hence [already] in Virtua." Phil's library then began to add their copy to the holdings, but that too had to be placed on back burner. Nevertheless, some of the information on the liturgical sheet music in the New York collection is now available through HUC's online catalog.

But what of the music that has yet to be entered into the new system? In conclusion, Phil said, "Stay tuned for 'Part III' of this presentation, which will be given by my successor, circa 2015."

Improving the Odds

While some libraries make a dramatic transition into more modern systems, others deal with slight but significant changes within the pre-existing. While the intent is improvement, the result might be hit or miss.

In "RLIN21: Is it a Good Bet?", Steven Bernstein, Goldsmith Catalog Librarian at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, gave a Power Point overview of the Research Library Group's development and implementation of RLIN21, beginning with a history of previous versions of RLIN. Through a witty use of poker metaphors, he explained the new features available in RLIN21, their pros and cons, and compared the features of RLIN21 to those of the previous version of RLIN.

Following his presentation, Steven opened up the floor for discussion, and many catalogers had a lot to say about their frustration and difficulties they encountered migrating to RLIN21. Five months later, Steven wrote this reporter, saying: "RLIN21 has greatly improved. They really only had problems during the first month (March) of being online."

Certainly, the cost of staying up to date has "upped the ante" as far as knowledge and maintenance of the latest equipment and cutting-edge retrieval. Headaches result, and new challenges arise. Nevertheless, as both speakers attest, even when the chips are down, the libraries can still succeed in holding all the cards. A big *todah rabah* to Phil and Steven for a double "winning" presentation. ■

Stanley Nachamie is currently on leave from his position as Authority Control Librarian for the City University of New York (CUNY).

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Hirsch began by elaborating on the obstacles to open dialogue between the traditionally observant and modernist sects of Judaism. "The first "problem," said Hirsch, "in interfacing with each other's movements is that people don't like to be challenged about their core beliefs; dialogue is threatening," even within Judaism. The next problem, Hirsch contends, is that "in matters of truth there is no compromise." Although traditional and modernist sects share beliefs, they also disagree.

In addition, Hirsch pointed out that many Orthodox believe that "convincing people of their truth is as imperative as redeeming kidnapped children." This leaves little common ground for those who believe in the literal truth of texts and tradition and others who have a more metaphorical or relativistic interpretation. "The assumption that one is absolutely right depresses dialogue," and "insistence on absolute truth has the tendency to promote intolerance," Hirsch said.

The third problem, Hirsch feels, is that the Orthodox world is challenged by the success of Judaism's modernist branches. He quoted a poll showing that the Orthodox constitute a mere 10% of all Jews. Often citing the Orthodox fear that there is inevitable assimilation within four generations, Reinman, Hirsch says, was eager to engage in dialogue in order to reach those who do not live a *halachic* (observant) life or believe in matrilineal descent.

Hirsch ended with a description of the censorship of the book the two rabbis wrote together. Reinman, a member of the Lakewood Yeshiva world, was able to have the book published only because his involvement in the project was not known. After only two joint appearances, Reinman bowed out of the contracted book tour, having been strongly urged to do so by his community.

Rabbi Hirsch expressed his admiration for Orthodox Jews. "Deep learning and intellectual fervor characterize Orthodoxy," he noted, as well as a "thirst for knowledge." Interestingly, the highest sales of the book were in Lakewood, Monsey, and Teaneck. Indeed, Hirsch also said that there is "considerable potential in dialogue because the Orthodox world is wonderfully diverse and open."

Cover-Up

Professor Marc B. Shapiro, the second speaker, holds the Weinberg Chair of Judaic Studies at the University of Scranton (Pennsylvania). A National

Jewish Book Award finalist, he is the author of *Between East and West: The Life and Works of Rabbi Jehiel Jacob Weinberg and The Limits of Orthodox Theology: Maimonides' Thirteen Principles Reappraised*.

Shapiro, who identifies himself as Modern Orthodox, has been studying instances of censorship in the Orthodox world. He also provided helpful handouts with examples of texts and images before and after "improvement," including the *kippah* added to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson's passport photograph.

"In the Orthodox world there is a self-appointed group of people who have decided what the masses should be exposed to," Shapiro contends. "Not book banning so much as eliminating the unpleasant." This trend causes problems for serious readers and scholars because "kosher books are being improved or altered without the reader's knowing it was done," Shapiro explained.

Of course, improving or altering books is not a new development. However, recent trends in the observance of *tznius*, or modesty, towards the more rigorous have led to some interesting "improvements" as 19th and 20th century *rebbezins'* portraits are retouched to add wigs or to button the top buttons of their blouses.

Words or sections eliminated by Christian censors in the medieval period have been replaced in some *siddurim* (prayerbooks) and Talmuds. ArtScroll has reinserted "*laminin ule-malshinim*" in the 12th blessing in the *Shmoneh Esrei*, but this has actually made some quite uncomfortable. ArtScroll's explanation for the anti-Christian verses in the closing prayer *Alenu* "has the history wrong," according to Shapiro; "it's a white lie, apologetics related to politics." Shapiro pointed out variant texts of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's 19th century *Igrot Tsafon*. This work originally included a section attacking what Hirsch felt to be the Rambam's "compromise with Greek philosophy," but a 1969 edition simply cuts out the criticism.

Shapiro included two title pages in the handout. In the reprint of the 1859 *Sefer Melekheth Mahashevet* the engraving of the author now sports a *kippah*. And in the reprinted edition of *Sefer Levush Malkhut* the voluptuous, naked figures have simply been whited out. Rav Kook's controversial status has resulted in his being, as Shapiro says, "removed from the Haredi world," as references to him are eliminated from various works.

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When writing Rabbi Weinberg's biography, Shapiro remarked, "People were afraid that Weinberg's pro-Herzl views were problematic." So was the revelation of the Rabbi's relationship with some at Hebrew Union College. "'ArtScroll' history equals hagiography if only the positive is written about," Shapiro pointed out.

Jewish tradition can be contradictory on the subject of objective truth, which is particularly problematic for scholars working in the Western tradition. For example, the Steipler Rebbe of Bnei Barak advised not to write about the eighteenth century forgeries of medieval manuscripts. "Judaism doesn't canonize truth," said Shapiro. "It's okay to tell an ugly bride she's beautiful. And, the Magen Avraham says you can say anything in the name of a *gadol* [Torah leader]."

Shapiro added, "The Chatam Sofer says we can lie and tell people it's a Torah law in any battle with Reform Jews." It is allowed, Shapiro said, to simplify a *makholet* (dispute) by telling a white lie.

Shapiro pointed out the conflict between views of some traditional Jews that "truth is instrumental and can be used as needed versus the modern outlook, which insists on transparency and accuracy."

Anachronisms seem to be irrelevant, as past behavior and views are harmonized with contemporary Orthodox trends. While the culture clash between the religious "improvers" and the scholarly "just-the-facts, Ma'am" school is hard to reconcile, librarians can be sure this will mean more and interesting work for catalogers and reference librarians. Presentations stimulated quite a number of questions and debates from the audience which would have continued if not for time constraints.

A big *yasher koach* to Marlene Schiffman for organizing a provocative and informative conference, which will give librarians in all branches of the field much to think about. NYMA gratefully extends its thanks to Michael Terry and the staff of the NYPL's Dorot Division for so graciously giving NYMA the use of the South Court Auditorium. ■

Marlene Schiffman
Mendel Gottesman Library
Yeshiva University
500 W. 185th Street
New York, NY 10033