

NYMA News

Newsletter of AJL-NYMA

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Group Work Collaborations Go Digital

@ Spring Conference

**by RENATE EVERS,
Head Librarian,
Leo Baeck Institute,
Center for Jewish History
Photos by TINA WEISS**

Great minds not only think alike but work alike. Today, scholars, teachers, and researchers make use of digital collections to cross disciplinary boundaries and bring new perspectives to the cultural record.

"Digital Libraries: Building, Collaboration, and Effectiveness" brought this current trend to light at NYMA's Spring 2008 Conference, held Monday, April 7th, at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Three distinguished speakers, from three distinguished institutions, described their respective current digitization programs and addressed the technical, organizational, and financial challenges--and, above all, the benefits of collective and collaborative work.

From an Empty Room

The first speaker, Bob Sink -- Chief of Archives and Library Services, The Center for Jewish History -- outlined the process of building a digital program for a consortium of cultural institutions and highlighted some of the newly digitized resources on the CJH Digital Collection Website.

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A Few Words

We are awesome! I have recently returned from the AJL Convention in Cleveland where NYMA members played an impressive role -- serving on both the Executive Board and Council, moderating many sessions, acting as liaisons to the Avi Chai Foundation, and organizing the special Wednesday program celebrating the Sydney Taylor Book Award's 40th Anniversary and Jewish Children's Literature. A special *yashar koach* to our own, Pearl Berger, who delivered the 2008 Rosaline and Meyer Feinstein Lecture.

Ahhh...summer! This is the season where I can catch up on all those things that I could not cram into those very busy days during the school year. It is also the time to reflect upon what was, and plan for the future. NYMA has sponsored some highly interesting and well-attended programs this spring: the Day School/High School and Cataloging Workshops, and the Spring Conference. If you missed any of them, you may listen to them (recorded live!) on the NYMA website, ajlnyma.org.

Our upcoming workshops and conferences are still in the planning stages as I write. The next cataloging workshop, in the fall, will build upon the topics discussed by Charlene Chou this past June. In keeping with our tradition of visiting new day schools and their impressive libraries, we anticipate holding next year's High School/Day School Workshop at the new Frisch School. Check the NYMA website and your email for details as they become available.

A new membership letter will be going out to you shortly. Please take the time to fill out the form and send in your NYMA dues. Be sure to include your email. Our listserv is up and running; it serves as a first line of communication with most of our members. Thank you to both Rita and Chaya for posting all of our announcements in a timely manner throughout the year.

Wishing you a safe and restful summer, and a *shana tova u'm'tukah*,

**Leslie Monchar
President, AJL-NYMA**

In the Image of G-d, Not Machines

Librarianship in the Postmodern Age

by DAVID LEVY, Librarian, Touro College

Professor Reif mailed into the AJL Cleveland awards dinner the following remarks: "Once upon a time . . . it was not unusual . . . for those with responsibilities in libraries to function as bibliophiles, bibliographers, researchers, managers, as well as being technologically adept. Great modern Jewish librarians . . . played such a variety of roles, wearing many hats, not so much because they were imposed upon them, but rather in response to what 'book learning' of written and oral traditions meant to them and their people." Reif is referring to a time when the ideal librarian was a scholar first and librarian second. Such a guardian guided our patrons to the recovery of cultural, historical, and *halakhic* (legal) memory and cared for the patron's whole development.

Fielding reference questions requires creativity besides mere technical proficiency, for many reasons. Often databases, internet, and OPAC can turn up homogenized hits. It is up to the librarian to draw parallels and insights from non-indexed interdisciplinary areas. For example, if the student is a physics major, why not consider Einstein's theory of relativity? For an art history major, why not consider Dali's painting of clocks melting?

One must recognize as a librarian when to be creative and when to focus and give ready factual responses. However, response to ref questions must never be robotic, rote, and conscripted, because questions are often multifaceted and there is a unique human being behind every question with different intellectual needs.

There is no substitute for having actually read and knowing what is in quality texts and merely being able to "access" that material in the flood of our "information age." A student who asks for material on the Jews of 16th century Safed when the computer is down may be well served if a librarian can remember having read an article of Solomon Schechter introducing the student to key players, events, and contents of that mystical period. It helps even more if the librarian knows intimately the works of contemporary authors (i.e. HaAri HaKodesh). It is trite but true that we must teach our patrons "how to fish for a lifetime rather than just for that day give them a fish platter." This involves helping fan if not igniting the sparks of love of learning, exploration, and quest.

Technology has immense potentials. A dialysis machine can prolong the life of one whose kidneys don't work, yet there is the problem of relegating authority to machines in a nuclear war. Likewise, there are drawbacks in postmodern librarianship to technology as a substitute for thinking. Students must not believe they can simply "Google" their assignments and copy and paste into a document—not only for copyright violation, but for flawed or useless information. Technological tools must not replace questioning, which is the piety of thought; thinking, which is extraordinary when it is transcendent; and remembering of traditions, which the Ba'al Shem Tov notes is redemptive. Computers may risk giving the message that everything is just a mouse click away, and this is counter to the rabbinic understanding that *lefum tsarah agrah* (according to the effort are the rewards). True librarianship and education must not advocate serving the teacher in order to receive a grade or prize, but ideally should foster learning on a level of love, non-ulterior motives, or what Rambam calls an internal excellence, rather than an external reward. Both are ultimately united in a common goal—the search for wisdom, understanding, and knowledge.

The moral imperative must see each person, not as a means to an end, but as a kingdom of ends. We must not let the risks of the postmodern age make extinct the librarian of ages past. This crisis in librarianship is also the crisis in education that may have lost sight of the forest for the trees.

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NYMA News is published twice a year, Winter/Spring & Summer/Fall, by the AJL-NYMA Committee. For questions or comments, contact Hallie Cantor, 383 Kingston Ave. #81, Brooklyn, NY 11213, or e-mail above.

Ezeh Yofi!

OPALS Hebrew Automation

@ Day School/High School Workshop

By **MARION M. STEIN**, High School Librarian,
The Abraham Joshua Heschel School

Ma chadash? Plenty, according to the Day School/High School Workshop, held Wednesday, March 19th, at the North Shore Hebrew Academy High School. A group of us were given a good look at OPALS, a new Hebrew-English open-source automation system.

At a Glance

North Shore librarian Joyce Levine began with "Overview and Practicum." Thanks to wireless connectivity, we followed her tour through the many features of this program, using both her own catalog and the demo version of OPALS.

Highlights of OPALS include additions that were made since our last viewing of the program. Fortunately, the people in charge are highly responsive to the needs of Judaica librarians and their institutions.

Some features of the cataloging and circulation modules that were recently added:

- Viewing of new items that have been entered into your OPAC system if you list them under a "new item" feature of the program.
- Links with Amazon-style thumbnails of the book and enriched content.
- Location of book that appears in the 852 (local holdings field) appears on the first screen.
- Global editing of items.
- Excellent bibliography creation.
- Very good Z39.50 capabilities. (Joyce uses the Israel Union Catalog for her Hebrew records and the Library of Congress for most everything else that she catalogs herself in house. She then showed us what we need to do to have them function in the OPALS system.)

Alas, the system has its flaws:

- Cross-referencing from "see" and "see also" entries is not (yet) available.
- Although an override of due dates exist, there is currently no way to change the number of times a book may be renewed. A "workaround" solution? Check an item in and then check it out again.

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(Conference, cont'd from Pg. 1)

The Center for Jewish History in New York is an umbrella for five cultural and research organizations: American Jewish Historical Society, American Sephardi Federation, the Leo Baeck Institute, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, and Yeshiva University Museum. The CJH digitization program is not a standalone system but is embedded in the larger technical infrastructure at the Center. A \$2 million grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) provided the funds for a shared online cataloging system for the libraries and archives, a museum system, as well as for a digital management system and a web portal for cross-searching. The Center decided to use DigiTool, an Ex Libris product, as its digital asset management system. According to Mr. Sink's estimate, at least \$26 billion is required to digitize everything – clearly a message for developing priorities and carefully selecting materials.

The CJH digitization program started in 2003 with a needs assessment. The Gruss Lipper Family Foundation financed the lab equipment and renovations, sponsored the staff for the first 2 years, and provided funds for the partner organizations for the preparation of the collections (e.g. cataloging).

The digital lab started working at the end of 2005. Under the leadership of former lab director Tony Gill, a Digital Manual and a Cataloging Handbook were developed, which formed the basis for the digitization program.

The CJH Digital Collections Website (<http://digital.cjh.org>) provides access to digital books, archival finding aids, archival documents, photos, maps, sound recordings, posters, broadsides, etc. In technical terms: about 36,000 digital images and 62.5 hours of audio files, using about 1.68 terabytes of storage, have been produced so far.

Mr. Sink presented some of the digital collections at the Center and demonstrated how to navigate and to search them – i.e. YUM's Grubere Collection of Women's Clothes, audio files from the Austrian Heritage Collection at the Leo Baeck Institute, and a collection of children's books (a collaborative project between Yeshiva University Museum and YIVO).

Lessons learned? The most important aspect of building a digitization program, apart from the technical challenges, was the establishment of uniform procedures and policies, and the adoption of standards, guidelines and best practices.



OVERVIEW - CHJ'S Bob Sink displays web and importance of "standards, guidelines and best practices."

Road Best Traveled

Naomi Steinberger--Director of Library Services, The Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary--presented the road JTS traversed for its own digitization program. The library developed a strategic plan in 2004: to digitize rare and endangered materials in order to limit handling of original documents, and to digitize on demand. The program is embedded in the library's mission of collecting, preserving and making available the literary and cultural heritage of the Jewish people.

The "Persistence of Memory" conference of the Northeast Document Conservation Center in 2005 helped the JTS Library to get the digital program on its way. JTS became a test site for an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)-funded project in winter/spring 2006. NEDCC/IMLS consultants visited for a digital needs assessment, and a questionnaire reviewed all early digital initiatives and projects. Meetings of people inside and outside the library helped shape a report describing the current status and formulated the following recommendations:

- suggestions for technical equipment;
- standards for digitization following the Digital Library Federation recommendations;
- best practices;
- technical procedures and workflows;
- digitization policies (rights management, quality control);
- development of a definitive digital preservation policy.

In winter 2006/2007 the first steps were taken to implement the IMLS recommendations: DigiTool (Ex Libris) was chosen as the management system in favor of an open source system, a DigiTool implementation team was created, a mission stated, a policy manual was created with a priority list, and funding sources were explored.

A grant application to METRO to digitize 250 wedding poems was successful. This collection was chosen as the first digitization project to utilize DigiTool, since it consists of flat objects, which were fully cataloged, had only little access, and are visually attractive.



THE SOURCE - Naomi Steinberger explains the creation of metadata.

Other donor-funded projects followed in 2008: A bookplate collection was added, as well as the Rosowsky Sound Archives.

Using examples from the JTS website (<http://digital.jtsa.edu>), Ms. Steinberger then showed the different challenges to the digitization process: creation of metadata for single-page and multi-page documents, display of Hebrew, selection of genre terms, and conversion to digital audio from metal disks.

Sound Judgments

How to create a cultural commonwealth in Judaica and transcend proprietary ownership of collections? This was the question Arthur Kiron - Schottenstein-Jesselson Curator of Judaica Collections, The Center for Advanced Judaica Studies Library, University of Pennsylvania Libraries-- addressed.

The term *cultural commonwealth* was coined by the 2007 report of the American Council of Learned Societies Commission on Cyberinfrastructure for the Humanities. Cyberinfrastructure encompasses more than the technical side. It also takes into account expertise, best practices, standards, tools, diverse collections of primary resources, and collaborative environments.

The Judaica Collection at Penn is a virtual library of 350,000 interdisciplinary volumes in 15 different campus libraries. The challenge? Determining how to build a digital

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(Conference, cont'd from Pg. 5)

program within a diverse setting, how to make judgments, and how to proceed in the digital management life cycle. The Cairo Genizah fragments are an example of a physically dispersed collection, in which parts often match each other, and where the sum becomes larger than its parts.

What does it mean to be the curator of virtual images? It is the act of mediating the relationship among real life objects and audiences with virtual facsimiles that produce new opportunities for learning, communication and value-added content.

At Penn two committees were established to formalize the guidelines with which to select the materials for the digitization and digital management lifecycle. Drafting a mission statement is crucial: it must clearly state what to do and why it is done. Formulating a strategy or statement allows for speaking with a level of confidence and authority to funders, planners, and consultants about what the needs are.

At Penn, a private research university, the library collections are created to support primarily the needs of the Penn community: instruction, professional knowledge, scholarship, and archival preservation. Digital Penn strategies are formed by collaborative partnerships in the context of creating a coherent network of knowledge environment for current and future generations of scholars that

lies in sync with national and international standards and practices.

Mr. Kiron highlighted the criteria:

- *Values:* judgment of significance, uniqueness, intellectual content, relationship to the local situation and constituents, utility, practicality.
- *Goals:* what do you want to see happen, prioritize, access, collaboration, functional enhancement. Mixture of values and goals--access is a value, but also an outcome.
- *Feasibility:* Condition, size, costs, funding, legal/copyright questions.
- *Duplication:* Duplicating existing digitization efforts should be avoided; however, sometimes a different digital quality is needed for a specific research aspect;
- *Cooperation:* Is it possible to cooperate with other organizations?
- *Sustainability:* Storage and preservation of images.

Mr. Kiron ended with words of advice: "Think through ahead of time and make judgments." Think about which content to select, how to go about making those decisions, how to implement a project, how to see it through from beginning to end, and how to make sure that sustainability is taken into account. Above all, think about the evaluation process--how to measure and judge whether the original judgments and actions have happened as envisioned.



A LOOK BACK- (l to r) Naomi Steinberger, Bill Sink, and Arthur Kiron survey historical collections.

(Workshop, Cont'd from Pg. 3)

- Emails of overdues must be sent to individuals after a list is generated.

Staff Support

In part two, "Experiences with Implementation," Beverly Geller, librarian of Frisch School, praised the technical support. All questions are dealt with by people who answer the phones immediately; all questions of security were dealt with to their administrators' satisfaction. Leslie Monchar, who has a K-12 library at the Kushner Academy and works weekly with all elementary-level classes, said that slow circulation was something that she can deal with—however, something that will need to be addressed by the OPALS team.

When asked about transferring circulation records at the time of switching to the OPALS system from a previous one, we were told that these records do not transfer and that everyone starts out in the new system with a "clean slate." Therefore, records of this would have to be kept separately.

State of the Union

The last speaker, Diane Romm--Avi Chai Book Shelf Program Coordinator—said that Avi Chai selected OPALS as the online system for the Union Catalog of Judaica School Libraries because of their openness to dealing with us and developing Hebrew capabilities, something bigger vendors had no interest in doing. The Union Catalog currently has 18 libraries included, three or four of which are elementary schools and the rest high schools. They hope to have 35 schools join in all. This exciting feature allows the participants to share cataloging, to view one another's collections all together, and, for local participants, to develop inter-library loans in the future. This is especially useful for sensitive subjects where some schools might want to see if others with a similar *hashkafah* (outlook) have purchased a particular title. This might be true, for example in the areas of trade books on Israel and high school fiction.

Can OPALS can be used on the Mac?
Diane said that she herself uses one.

Points to note:

*OPALS is a "work in progress." It is new and constantly being updated.

*Fees are very low:

Initial set-up fee	< \$500
Annual Tech Support	\$500
Annual remote hosting	\$250
Union Catalog member	\$150
C.E.R.F searching	Free

[This last item is OPALS' own federated search capability. The first year is free.]

The Union Catalog cost is a one-time fee. The Avi Chai Foundation is paying for the initial setup, first year tech support, and the Union Catalog participation for all Book Shelf libraries that sign onto this system.

The transfer to OPALS is easy. By sending a single export file, an entire school catalog can be delivered to OPALS, which will set it up for you in hours. All this is done remotely. In addition, because it is web-based, the catalog can be worked on anytime from anywhere. You don't have to be at a particular work station. This is especially handy for those of us who sometimes work from home.

Leslie had a story of her own to tell. While in Florida last summer with her mother she was able to oversee the transfer of her library's online catalog to OPALS from her computer in Florida. She was in touch with the people at OPALS the whole time and was very pleased with the results. The few errors that were detected later were easily fixed.

Of course, this report does not answer all (or even most) of the possible questions that a prospective user might have, but it is a start. For me, I see an immense advantage of being part of a consortium of Judaica school libraries. The low cost is also attractive—especially at this time of budgetary constraints—and I'm sure we can all think of things to do with the tens of thousands of dollars that we would *not* need to spend on a library automation system. This holds true even of schools that could afford to pay for other, pricier systems. I hope that you find this report helpful as you anticipate your own online cataloging needs.

Past / Present / Future

Live from NYMA

Monday, June 2nd, NYMA held its annual Cataloging Workshop, where Charlene Chou, Catalog Librarian at Columbia University, spoke about "Expanding the Catalogers Role in the Era of Global Digital Libraries." Her PowerPoint presentation, complete with an audio recording of the entire workshop, is now available on the AJL-NYMA website:

<http://www.ajlnyama.org/Events/2007-2008/2008%20Cataloging%20Workshop/>

Missed any of our other exciting events? Now you may listen to them (recorded live!) on the NYMA website, www.ajlnyama.org. These recordings are available for FREE in Windows Media Audio Format (*.wma). Simply click on the "Past Events" link and select the event to which you would like to listen from the appropriate dropdown menu. The audio recordings can't substitute for the networking that takes place when actually present (or the yummy refreshments!), but they are a wonderful resource if attendance is impossible.

Stepping Down

An era has ended. **ESTHER NUSSBAUM**, founding member of NYMA, is leaving her position as librarian at Ramaz. She writes:

"After 30 years as the Director of Library and Media Services at Ramaz Upper School, I am leaving my position at the close of this school year. Since I am taking a part-time job in a non-profit agency, I am not exactly 'retiring,' but it was time to seek employment with greater flexibility of time - especially since two of my children live in Jerusalem with their families. It's been a very gratifying career, and my involvement with AJL has been a great source of friendship, collegial association and continuing education. Having served in several Board and Council positions I am particularly aware of the wonderful work of our professional association and its contribution to the daily affairs of each of us through HaSafran." NYMA wishes Esther all the best and a tremendous *todah rabbah* for years of excellent work.

Centenary

Monday, April 7th, the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary hosted an evening honoring Moritz Steinschneider, Father of Modern Jewish Bibliography. Moritz Steinschneider (1816-1907) was a founder of the "Science of Judaism" (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) and

one of the most prolific authors in the history of Jewish scholarship. Featured were a small exhibition of Steinschneideriana celebrating his remarkable achievements and lectures by distinguished scholars.

Take a Bow

The following NYMA members have joined the AJL national team (2008-2010):

STEPHANIE GROSS, together with Diane Romm (of Avi Chai Foundation): co-chairs of the AJL Mentoring Committee.

ELANA GENSLER: AJL Recording Secretary.

RACHEL GLASSER: AJL Corresponding Secretary.

NYMA wishes them all the best.

Yael Penkower, former NYMA member, has translated a Hebrew version of *To Live and Fight Another Day: The Story of a Jewish Partisan Boy*, launched by Ra'anana Public Library, in Israel. Authored by

BRACHA WEISBARTH, former NJ chapter president, this book tells the story of our hidden soldiers who fought the Nazi enemy. It is based on the life of the author's brother Benjamin, who attended the launching.

Empire of their Own

"Hollywood Exiles: How Immigrants in the Performing Arts Transformed American Film, Theater and Music," was held Wednesday, May 14th, at the Ivan M. Stettenheim Library of Congregation Emanu-El and hosted by

LIZA STABLER. Author Joseph Horowitz (*Understanding Toscanini and Classical Music in America*) discussed the impact on American culture by East European immigrants who found a new home in the film industry, which in turn influenced them.

Mazel Tov

To **NOREEN WACHS**, on the birth of her grandson Yosef Chaim. Parents Josh and Tamar Kahn. May she *schep nachas*.

Baruch Dayan Emes

To **NOREEN WACHS**, on the loss of her husband Joel. May she be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

The End of *NYMA News*?

Hardly!

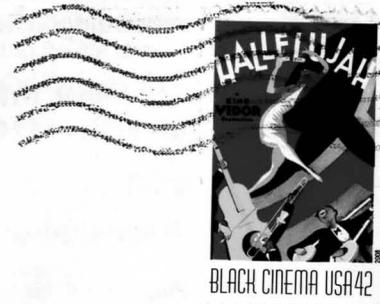
Starting with our next issue, *NYMA News* goes paperless. That's right -- the same wonderful newsletter will be available to all our members in PDF file, which we will be distributing electronically. You'll be able to download our informative reviews of workshops, conferences, and events serving Judaica libraries and collections in the New York Metropolitan Area.

In our high-tech era, we at *NYMA News* aim to keep lock in step with media trends. We hope our readers will, too!

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