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## Vol. 16/17 Editor's Note

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# Editor's Note

Volume 16/17 is a double issue of *Judaica Librarianship*, containing articles on a diverse range of topics. It took longer than usual for a critical mass of articles to reach my in-box and then go through the editorial process. And then, before I knew it, the “critical mass” grew into a veritable *embarras de richesses*. For me – and for you, too, I hope – this issue has been well worth the wait.

## DIGITAL PARADOXES

“Information wants to be free,” the saying goes and indeed, researchers can now tap into an unprecedented gamut of online discovery tools, websites, databases, and full-text resources entirely free of charge. And yet, the digital divide persists because much information is *not* free and is unlikely to become so anytime soon. Coping with these exciting technological transformations during a period of serious economic stress poses a continuous set of challenges to our libraries.

Even the wealthiest Judaica libraries take a highly selective approach to acquiring the large packages of electronic resources that come onto the market—be they specialized databases of textual variants in the Talmud or sets of historic Jewish newspapers published in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century United States. As for those Judaica libraries that are not so well situated, over the past decade we have witnessed the downsizing of operations, staff attrition, closings, mergers, and in several particularly disturbing instances the culling of rare book collections that were deemed expendable and extraneous by the institutions' trustees.

## BUILDING AND MAINTAINING DISTINCTIVE COLLECTIONS

Now, holdings of rare and special materials are precisely what cause a library to stand out among its peers in this digital age. In this issue we have articles on two very distinctive library collections: In “Nahum Stutchkoff's Yiddish Play and Radio Scripts in The Dorot Jewish Division, New York Public Library,” Amanda (Miryem-Khaye) Seigel reveals a unique body of literary work in one of the world's great research libraries. And in “IsraPulp: The Israeli Popular Literature Collection at Arizona State University,” Rachel Leket-Mor guides us through the history of non-canonized Hebrew literature—with a particular focus on a spe-

cialized book collection that she has built up at ASU and that promises to turn her home institution into a “destination library.”

## FROM THE WORLDS OF CATALOGING

Cataloging practices and initiatives are the focus of three articles: Regular users of WorldCat have observed the gradual transformation of that indispensable bibliographical utility into a “world catalog” genuinely worthy of that appellation. Over the past several years Israeli libraries—spearheaded by the National Library of Israel—have contributed hundreds of thousands of catalog records to WorldCat; Elhanan Adler and Marina Goldsmith provide the background to these developments in “The National Library of Israel and OCLC.”

Many university libraries build their Judaica and Hebraica holdings by acquiring collections in bulk. The resulting backlogs cause headaches in terms of basic inventory control, not to mention public access. In “Frontlog Cataloging: Using In-Process Records to Reveal Backlogged Collections,” Jasmin Nof describes processes that have been developed at the University of Maryland to address these problems.

Discussions of ways in which library classification schemes and subject heading lists handle topics of Jewish interest and content have tended to overlook Sears subject headings, which are widely used in medium-sized libraries. Sara Rofofsky Marcus treats this largely neglected topic in “The Changing Terms in Sears.”

## LIBRARY HISTORY, BIBLIOMETRICS

Library and bibliographical history has always been featured regularly in *Judaica Librarianship*, and this issue continues that tradition. We are pleased to present articles by Rachel Simon, on “The Contribution of Hebrew Printing Houses and Printers in Istanbul to Ladino Culture and Scholarship,” and by Amy F. Stempler, on “Isaac Edward Kiev: Early Leader in American Judaica Librarianship”—and AJL pioneer. Rounding out the “Essays and Research” section of this issue is an exercise in bibliography and bibliometrics by Daniel E. Feinberg and Alice Crossetto, “Cookbooks: Preserving Jewish Tradition.”

## EJ2—PROMISES KEPT?

We continue our series on the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* with two contributions: The first is a review essay by Professor Eliezer Diamond, “Rabbinics in the New *Encyclopaedia Judaica*,” which offers a close analysis of the treatment of classic rabbinic topics in that reference work. In a companion review, “Encyclopedia Interrupta, or Gale’s Unfinished: the Scandal of the *EJ2*,” Barry Dov Walfish does not mince words concerning his deep disappointment

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(one that is shared by many Judaica librarians) with the unfulfilled promise of that encyclopedia in both its print and electronic versions.

## IN PARTING . . .

This is the fifth and final volume of *Judaica Librarianship* to appear under my editorship.<sup>1</sup> A combination of work-related factors is leading me to relinquish this post. I have participated in AJL's peer-review journal since its very first issue and it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as its editor. As has been announced in *Ha-Safran*, the new editor-in-chief will be Rachel Leket-Mor. I will be delighted to assist her and her editorial team as they steer *JL* along new paths.

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<sup>1</sup> Or: these are the fifth *and* sixth volumes, taking into account that the volume at hand is a double issue.