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## Vol. 15 Editor's Note

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# Editor's Note

## HEBREW BIBLE VERSUS OLD TESTAMENT

Back when I was a novice Judaica librarian—"a thousand years ago" (as my late mother was wont to say to her fourth-graders)—I first read about perceived Christian biases in national cataloging standards. That was still the card-catalog era, so it was relatively easy—though not necessarily cheap—for our libraries to instate local practices in descriptive and subject cataloging. Networked cataloging makes it much more difficult for library administrators to indulge such idiosyncrasies. For Judaica librarians, one of the most enduring—and vexing—of all cataloging issues has involved the heading "Bible. O.T." During the last couple of decades we have tended to swallow our pride and allowed the Tanakh, or Hebrew Bible, to be subsumed within that heading. But, with the pending implementation of a new international cataloging code, *Resource Description and Access (RDA)*, the "Bible. O.T." dilemma has once again reared its ugly head. David Conners, in his article "A 'Mind-Boggling' Implication: The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and the Definition of a Work," addresses this complex issue head-on.

## GENEALOGICAL RESOURCES AND THE SMALL JUDAICA LIBRARY

In 2007, the Association of Jewish Libraries honored the genealogical publisher Avotaynu with a body-of-work citation. In light of the sizable number of genealogical publications to receive AJL's Reference and Bibliography Awards, it was highly fitting to single out the leading publisher in the Jewish genealogical field for this special award. The age of the reference book is still very much with us (as will be reiterated below), but as with other areas of research the Web has assumed paramount importance for genealogists. This important point is underscored by Beth Dwoskin, in her survey article "Genealogy in the Jewish Library: An Update." Moreover, access to digital resources now makes it possible for the small Judaica library to serve as an important node for genealogical research.

## "OUR COLLECTIONS"

This issue launches a new section—one that I hope will become a regular feature in this journal: "Our Collections." This rubric is inspired by a long-running series in the *Jewish Book Annual*, about individual Judaica libraries. The first

contribution to “Our Collections” is an overview by Gilles Rozier, of Europe’s largest Yiddish library, the Bibliothèque Medem in Paris. That library’s roots in the socialist labor movement evoke comparison with numerous other Yiddish cultural ventures. But where those enterprises have flagged the Bibliothèque Medem has flourished, due to a combination of visionary leadership and sheer good fortune. In the wake of the Holocaust and in the face of powerful assimilatory pressures, it has successfully weathered the generational transition while at the same time benefiting from a revival of interest in Yiddish culture in France and elsewhere in Western Europe. Beyond that, the Bibliothèque Medem is navigating the technological transition; together with the libraries of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Séminaire Israélite de France, it is a charter member of the European Network of Judaica and Hebraica Libraries, which hosts the online “Rachel” union catalog (<http://www.rachelnet.org>).

## NEW REFERENCE SOURCES

Whenever I look up something in the famous *Jewish Encyclopedia*, published a century ago by Funk & Wagnalls, I tend to grow misty-eyed. Outdated as it is, the old *JE*—which was published during the heyday of grand encyclopedias—has enduring value as a reference work. But as the reviews in this issue of *Judaica Librarianship* reveal, landmark Jewish encyclopedias continue to come out—whether in paper only (the *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*,<sup>1</sup> reviewed by James P. Rosenbloom), electronically only (*Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, reviewed by Yaffa Weisman), or in paper and electronically (the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, or *EJ2*). Rather than attempt a comprehensive review of the 22-volume *EJ2*, *JL* has “commissioned” several reviews of major topics covered there, at the initiative of our Editorial Board member Barry Dov Walfish. Reviews of *EJ2*’s treatments of Women and Yiddish (both written by Faith Jones) appear in these pages. Other aspects of the encyclopedia will be discussed in future volumes of this journal.

To round out the present issue, Roger S. Kohn contributes an in-depth review of *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library*, a catalog of one of the world’s most important repositories (and winner of the 2008 AJL Bibliography Award), and Steven M. Bergson has once again assembled an interesting bibliography of articles that have been “scattered” about the literature.

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<sup>1</sup> An electronic version of the *YIVO Encyclopedia* is in the works.