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ARCHIVES

Jewish Archival Holdings in the Five New States of Germany: Creating an Inventory*

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Abstract: The Leo Baeck Institute, New York, is creating a database registering the Jewish archival holdings of repositories in the five new states of Germany. The Colloquium about Problems and Issues in Jewish Archives and Historiography in the Five New States of Germany, led to the shaping of a project utilizing the Institute's experience in computer-based cataloging, its expertise in the formulation and expansion of a German-language version of Library of Congress subject headings, and the ground-breaking research surveys of Helmut Eschwege. The project, funded by the German Interior Ministry, Section for Religious Affairs, is administered through the Historische Kommission zu Berlin, under the academic guidance of Prof. Reinhard Rürup, chairman of the LBI's Academic Council in Germany. Further cooperative projects to refine the cataloging of Jewish holdings are in the process of development with the state and local archives in the new states. This interim report comes near the halfway point in a two-year funded project. Planning and technical aspects are described. Preliminary reports of findings illustrate the value of the work.

A Promise Fulfilled

October 26, 1991 was a date on which the Leo Baeck Institute (LBI) made history: For the first time since the destruction of the German Jewish community, a Jewish organization convoked a scholarly conference in eastern Germany. That conference, given the name "Colloquium about Problems and Issues in Jewish Archives and Historiography in the Five New States of Germany," was both a fulfillment and a beginning.

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Launching the project fulfilled the foresight and vision of the Institute's honorary international president, Rabbi Dr. Max Gruenewald, of blessed memory. On November 11, 1989, Dr. Gruenewald, one-time spiritual leader in Mannheim, President of that community, and among the last surviving members of the executive of the Reichsvertretung (the only central organization of German Jews), called on the present administration of the LBI to initiate research about Jewish history in the newly opened areas of Germany. Recalling earlier proposals to set up a grand inventory of all European archives, at a meeting just two days after the Berlin Wall fell, his words led directly to the current exploration of the vast archives of East Germany.

The Project is Launched

A Colloquium in October 1991 began the work. Calling together archivists and historians, as well as leaders of the LBI from each of its centers and the Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft (WAG),¹ these discussions set the stage for a project of signal importance for Jewish historiography as well as the art and science of archival cataloging.

The project which emerged from that meeting, financed primarily with grants from the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Section for Religious Affairs, and supplemented by the Saxony State Cultural Foundation, began in August of 1992. Prof. Reinhard Rürup, chairman of the WAG, supervises an archival team; Dr. Stefi Jersch-Wenzel of the Historische Kommission zu Berlin (HiKo) is project administrator. The team members for the initial phase are Dr. Nathan "Nusi" Sznajder and Dr. Andreas Reinke. Their work has been assisted by students and relies on cooperation of personnel in the various archives they have visited. Dr. Reinke (1993) reports a total of 450 repositories slated for inclusion in the inventory (see Figure 1 for an excerpt from the directory of repositories). Meetings of archivists representing repositories

at different levels throughout the new German states were held in October 1991, February 1992, and October 1992; each meeting has advanced this project.

The project has two main phases. The first is a general inventory of cataloged collections, which Reinke (1993) reports is nearly complete in Mecklenburg-Pomerania and Brandenburg as well as East Berlin.²

For the second phase, work guidelines were developed by the project team before signing contracts with local archivists to advance cataloging of relevant previously uncataloged materials in their repositories. The finding aids use the local archive's own cataloging procedures. The purpose of the contracts is to speed progress in cataloging the materials for Jewish historical research. Completion of this phase will require up to four years of work.

The local archivists are responsible for the finding aids for their institutions. As the new finding aids are completed, this information will be added to the database. As with earlier phases, subject indexing in the computer eases access.

The remainder of this paper addresses two primary issues. First, it delineates the philosophy of the project. Second, it illuminates the way in which the experience of the LBI New York in creating its own computerized database for its archival holdings led to direct input and the provision of multiple access points to materials, using Library of Congress subject headings.

Enhancing Access to Collections

The project aims first and foremost to increase accessibility. This was held to be of special importance in this instance, because the records of Jewish communities and individual Jews had suffered enormous disruption in successive waves during the past century. What comes to mind immediately are the depredations

NUMMER 181
 NAME Stadtarchiv Görlitz
 STRASSE Untermarkt 6/8
 STADT O-8900 Görlitz
 TELEFON 0 35 81/6 76 15
 PERSON Peter Wenzel
 LAND S
 ART Stadtarchiv
 \$

NUMMER 325
 NAME Evangelische Kirche der schlesischen Oberlausitz - Das
 Konsistorium
 STRASSE Berliner Str. 62
 POSTFAC PF 557
 STADT O-8900 Görlitz
 TELEFON 0 35 81/62 47
 PERSON Puschmann
 LAND S
 ART Kirche
 SONSTIG lt.schriftl. Antwort kein Material
 \$

NUMMER 326
 NAME Apostolische Administratur Görlitz - Ordinariat
 STRASSE Carl-von-Ossietzky-Str. 42
 POSTFAC PF 127
 STADT O-8900 Görlitz
 TELEFON 0 35 81/62 91
 PERSON Herr Richter
 LAND S
 ART Kirche
 SONSTIG lt.schriftl. Antwort kein Material
 \$

NUMMER 346
 NAME Evangelische Kirche des Görlitzer Kirchengebietes -
 Konsistorium Archiv
 STRASSE Berliner Str. 62
 STADT O-8900 Görlitz
 LAND S
 ART Kirche
 \$

Figure 1. Excerpt from the directory of archival repositories slated for inclusion in the inventory.

suffered during the Nazi years, which saw Jewish communities eliminated with utmost brutality. Perhaps less obvious, but equally pernicious, was the neglect, abuse, and disorder which the suppression of all discourse about Jewish history in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) fostered. Only very late in the four-decade history of that Communist state

did a few courageous and commendable individuals dare to take the risk of hauling Jewish materials out of oblivion in order to begin the arduous, time-consuming, and often frustrating task of registering the existence of destroyed communities.

Two other disruptions also color this picture. First, smaller communities faced dis-

appearance as Jews moved from rural areas to cities after civil equality was granted in the 1870s. This led to the creation of the Gesamtarchiv der Deutschen Juden (Berlin, 1905) as a central collecting point. That archive was first confiscated by the Nazis and later found its way—piecemeal—into several repositories. Some of that material was further

disrupted when the Soviet occupation forces shipped it east at the end of World War II. This process is illuminated in several recent reports on the Moscow Special Archive (Aly and Heim, 1993).

Jewish archival materials in Eastern Germany survived through luck. Even repositories undisturbed through the war years suffered through the process of centralization undertaken by the Communist state. Cases were reported in which any material in Hebrew script was boxed together, regardless of provenance or content. Personnel was simply not available to read and interpret materials in non-roman alphabets, the more so in an antiquated handwriting. Altogether, the conditions demanded an attempt at recording the location and contents of the repositories.

Before approaching the Interior Ministry for funding, we knew through the path-finding research of the late Helmut Eschwege that the holdings were there to be found (Eschwege, III: 1332f).³ His independent project of sending letters to 800 repositories in the GDR, asking whether they held archival material about Jews, received positive answers from nearly 400 of the places he had written to!

The relatively compact area of East Germany was once home to a substantial Jewish population. Based on the 1932/33 directory of Jewish communities,⁴ nearly 150,000 Jews lived in what became the GDR (see Table 1). Their history is reflected in 16 Central State Archives and nearly 300 State and City Archives, including 80 smaller academic, church, party, and organizational archives. A dozen Jewish community archives, including the Centrum Judaicum in Berlin, constitute a separate category (Reinke, 1993).

The October 1991 Colloquium which set out to clarify the work to be done, included presentations by two East German scholars, Dr. Elisabeth Brachmann-Teubner (1993), of the Bundesarchiv division at Potsdam, and Dr. Hermann Simon, director of the Stiftung Centrum Judaicum in Berlin. The questions which they placed before the sixty scholars assembled in Leipzig revealed not only that somewhat more work than expected had been accomplished by a small group of dedicated, interested people, but that for some of the archives, finding aids already exist or are in preparation. It was concluded that cooperation could be expected from the city and state archives distributed across the five states, as well

Table 1
Pre-War East German Jewish Communities

<u>State</u>	<u>No. of Communities</u>	<u>Jewish Population</u>
Brandenburg	42	8,442
Mecklenburg-Pomerania	19	1,593
Saxony	8	23,252
Saxony-Anhalt	43	9,581
Thuringia	26	3,603
<u>East Berlin</u>	1	<u>100,000*</u>
Total 1932	139	146,471

**Estimate based on the 1932 population of Greater Berlin: 172,672*

as from the directorate of the former Central State Archives that have become branches of the Bundesarchiv.

Immediately subsequent to the Leipzig colloquium, Professors Rürup and Jersch-Wenzel accompanied the LBI executive to the Federal Ministry of the Interior in Bonn, where at a meeting with Ministerialdirektor von Köckritz the work plan, budget, and other parameters for a cooperative project between the LBI and the Historische Kommission zu Berlin found approval. The project goal is an inventory system which directs researchers to the finding aids for materials pertinent to Jewish history in any period located in the panoply of archival repositories in the former East Germany (Eschwege, III: 1332).⁵ The geographic limitation arises out of the political anomaly of unification—which makes funds available for work in the East which are not available for parallel and equally vital work in the West. A secondary motivation is the concern voiced by the LBI and echoed by a chorus of other watchers of Judaica collections throughout the world lest additional treasures belonging to the Jewish people mysteriously and inappropriately appear at auction.

Writing the grant application and the funding process became a cooperative effort in which Fred Grubel, LBI New York's long-time director and International Executive Vice President, Prof. Rürup of the WAG, and I each played a role. Emanating from my draft in English, the final German version, which was accepted by the

Interior Ministry, matched a member of the research team from New York with a researcher in Berlin.

Computerization of Archival Finding Aids

In New York, where the computerization of the records of Leo Baeck Institute archival holdings originated in the preparation for publication of the *Catalog of the Archival Collections* (Grubel et al., 1990), LBI archivists used the same program⁶ to develop a format for recording the finding aids of the repositories whose holdings were to be included in the Inventory of Jewish Archival Holdings in the Five New States of Germany. We began by asking what information we wanted to be able to retrieve. The Library of Congress (LC) subject headings in use in the LBI online catalog were reviewed; based on LC standards and adapted to our specialized collections, the headings were translated into German, coincidentally making the online inventory accessible bilingually (see Figure 2). In consultation with the Historische Kommission, additional specific subject headings were established to reflect categories of material which are unknown in the LBI collection, but important in the city, regional, and museum collections considered in the project.⁷

The establishment of the database through direct input by researchers sitting in the archival repositories allows for efficiency and reduction of clerical assistance needed in this phase, which would have been unthinkable with earlier gener-

Unterfranken -- Lower Franconia
 Verbalgeschichte (Mündlichegeschichte) -- Oral history
 Vereinigte Staaten -- United States
 Vereinte Nationen -- United Nations
 Verlage -- Publishers
 Verlagswesen -- Publishing industry
 Verschleppte (DPs) -- Displaced Persons
 Volks- und Betriebswirtschaftsgeschichte -- Economic and Business
 history
 Volkskunde -- Folklore
 Volkszählung -- Census
 Waisen- und Waisenhäuser -- Orphans and Orphan Asylum
 Wannseekonferenz -- Wannsee Conference
 Warschau -- Warsaw
 Warschauer Ghetto -- Warsaw (ghetto)
 Wechsel -- Bills of Exchange
 Westberlin; Jüdisches leben nach 1945 -- Berlin, West; Jewish life
 after 1945
 Widerstand -- Resistance
 Wien -- Vienna
 Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen- und organisationen (Fürsorgeeinrichtungen)
 -- Welfare Institutions and organizations
 Wohnarchitektur -- Architecture, Domestic
 Zionismus -- Zionism
 Zurückerstattung (Wiedergutmachung) -- Restitution
 Zwangsarbeit -- Forced Labor
 Zweiter Weltkrieg -- World War II
 Zweiter Weltkrieg; Widerstand -- World War II; resistance
 Zweiter Weltkrieg; Untergrundbewegungen -- World War II;
 underground movements

Figure 2. Bilingual (German-English) subject headings used in the archival inventory. These include translated Library of Congress subject headings and additional specific terms needed to describe the collections.

ations of computers. For the purposes of the project, a Toshiba 386 notebook with an 80 MB hard drive proved to offer the best available combination of speed, versatility, battery capacity, and memory size to handle the expected volume of data.

The project is not creating new finding aids for the individual repositories. Although Professors Jersch-Wenzel and Rürup allotted a small amount of funds for contracts with the local archives in the project budget, the goal here is primarily to point the way to existing finding aids and use the power of computers to help researchers find corresponding collections in various archives, thereby filling in lacunae of incomplete documentation.

Types of Materials in the Archives

What are the archival materials which can be expected to be found in these repositories? The records fall into several broad categories. In some cases, in the municipal or state repository there are found—among other kinds of documents—birth, marriage, and death records. These accompany details about temporary Jew-

ish visitors to fairs and markets, as well as detailed accounts of the communal life of the Jewish community.

The details of the destruction of Jewish life under the Nazis are inescapable (Reinke, 1993). Indeed, the easiest material to locate is the documentation of inner Jewish communal life (for the entire span of German Jewish history). Much harder to isolate and segregate is the material which relates to the various aspects of Jewish history as German history and the relationship between Jewish and German history. These latter categories require careful definition of subject and intent.

Some of the critical decisions arise in institutional archives, such as the records of the Charité, the Berlin hospital whose staff included many Jews, including apostates. Since the study of Jews in the German professions is of more than passing interest, and since many surnames that English speakers consider Jewish are less clearly so in German, great care has to be taken not to include or exclude from the reference list individuals whose career and life should be of interest to re-

searchers in German Jewish history. Likewise, it is impractical to expect the research team members to be acquainted with the name of every Jewish physician associated with every institution in Germany over a century or more.

The question of apostates is perhaps even more vexing: many apostates continued to be perceived as Jews long after their conversion; a significant number are documented as active in Jewish cultural—although not religious—life until the present time. Determination of inclusion and exclusion is therefore a critical task, and one of the many reasons why the project required advanced doctoral students as research team members.

Other questions arise from tax and police records which include so much material relating to the Jews, because Jews were required to register with the police regularly, as well as to pay special taxes. One suggestion that was made—perhaps only half in jest—was to catalog all material *not* relating to Jews as a means of reducing the work. Nonetheless, new finding aids available in the Saxon State Archive

and City Archives and the Bundesarchiv sections in Potsdam and Merseburg have delineated the enormous holdings in these major centers and enabled them to be included with a detail not achievable in other cases.

At the risk of a certain degree of inconsistency, we decided to provide as much detail as possible from each of the repositories logged into the database (see sample record in Figure 3). In addition to size, span, content, author, and subject entries, fields were proposed to reflect the condi-

tion of the materials. This was done with a special eye to locating and isolating holdings that are in danger of rapid deterioration. For these items, separately funded microform preservation projects can be anticipated.

REC A100-B1
 BI Rep.III (S.52: Synagoge)
 BII Nr.1: Wahl der Repräsentanten und ihrer Stellvertreter
 1854-1917
 ; Nr.2: Repräsentantenversammlung 1856-1920
 ; Nr.3: Vorlagen des Vorstands an die Rep.Versammlung 1860-1921
 ; Nr.4: Beschlüsse der Rep.Versammlung und deren Bestände
 1854-1918
 ; Nr.5: Jüdische Synode und Gemeindetag 1869-1894
 ; Nr.6: Miscellena 1894-1922
 ; Nr.7: Rep.Versammlungen 1885-1922
 ; Nr.8: Cultus-und Kulturkommission 1855-1922
 ; Nr.9: Bauliche Einrichtung der Synagogen 1852-1917
 ; Nr.10: Synagogen-Ordnung 1858-1884
 ; Nr.11: Die Synagogenstände 1855-1870
 ; Nr.12: Religionsunterricht 1851-1895
 ; Nr.13: Religionsunterricht 1895-1922
 ; Nr.14: Patriotische Gedenktage 1866-1915
 ; Nr.15: Fleisch-Rituale 1870-1920
 ; Nr.16: Bau einer neuen Synagoge 1862-1869
 ; Nr.17: Bau einer neuen Synagoge 1869-1908
 ; Nr.18: Umbau der Synagoge 1909-1914
 ; Nr.19: Synagogengrundstück 1909-1922
 ; Nr.20: Einweihung der Synagoge 1869-1870
 ; Nr.21: Angelegenheiten der Synagoge 1906
 ; Nr.22: Gottheiner Stiftung 1913-1920
 ; Nr.23: Cohnsche Stiftung 1915-1922
 ; Nr.24: Heymann Stiftung 1917-1921
 ; Nr.25: Leopold Cohn Stiftung 1914-1919
 ; Nr.26: Schächt-Angelegenheiten 1932-1933
 ; Nr.27: Studienreisen und Synagogenberichte 1909
 ; Nr.28-30: Protokollbücher 1850-1902
 ; Die folgenden Akten haben anderen Registraturbildner
 (Magistrat)
 ; Nr.31-34: Wahlangelegenheiten der hiesigen Synagogengemeinde
 1872-1894
 ; Nr.35: Errichtung einer jüdischen Synagoge 1873
 ; Nr.36: Wahlangelenheiten der Synagogengemeinde 1875
 ; Nr.37: Das jüdische Schulwesen 1872
 ; Nr.38: Errichtung der Synagogen-Gemeinde 1923-1938
 ; Nr.39: Wahlsachen der Synagogen-Gemeinde 1923-1935
 ; Nr.40: Eheregister der Juden 1850-1874
 ; Nr.41: Sterberegister der Juden 1850-1873
 BVIII 8-Apr-1993, ns
 ; Nr.1-30 sind von der Gestapo beschlagnahmte Akten, die der
 Gemeinde Görlitz
 gehörten und dem Archiv überführt wurden
 BX Görlitz
 BXI Jüdisches Gemeindewesen
 ; Personenstandsregister
 ; Eheregister
 ; Sterberegister
 ; Jüdisches Schulwesen
 ; Rituelles Schächten
 ; Jüdische Stiftungen
 §

Figure 3. Sample record from the database, describing the holdings of one repository.

Current Work and Future Plans

Formal work on the project began in August 1992. Two archivists made trial runs in the state archive in Potsdam, known as the Orangerie. These helped clarify the strengths and weaknesses of the plan and enabled small corrections to be made. At the end of October 1992 (Brenner, 1992), a meeting of the State archivists called at Berlin set the stage for their increased cooperation, both in making the finding aids accessible to the researchers and in utilizing their existing staff, with minimal financial contribution from the project to further the cataloging of the holdings in their trust. As that work progresses, the database continues to grow.

Drs. Reinke and Sznajder travelled extensively through the eastern states, visiting the state and city archives, meeting with archival directors and leaders of the now minuscule Jewish community. They have been greeted with helpfulness, courtesy, and cooperation. Dr. Sznajder, who left the project at the end of its first year, uncovered remarkable material in community archives about the former Jewish life in Schwerin and Magdeburg (Reinke, 1993),⁸ as well as the shards of Jewish life which remained after Nazism's defeat through the repressive years of Communist rule.⁹

Precise publication plans have not been formulated. Yet after long debate, the success in designing the project was the decision to go directly to electronic files. With this database, the choices and variety of formats through which the inventory can be made accessible is vast. Whether left in electronic form or distributed in hard copy, the database will provide ease of access and a wealth of new information about the history, life, culture, and creativity which constituted the complex society of German Jews.

We believe that the project itself sets a model and serves as a plan for reconnoitering the vast storehouse of information located behind the former Iron Curtain that the cold war years erected and whose dismantling has brought both light and air into the darkest of archives. As conservationists, however, we should all be aware that without the proper precautions and environmental conditions, light and air may be the worst enemies of the documents that are housed in those ar-

chives. Whether in Germany or throughout the former Communist states, the great task for archivists, historians, and genealogists is to focus on both the content and condition of these precious footprints of the Jewish saga in Europe so that future generations of historians will have access to the research materials that have been hidden from sight for most of this century.

How very fortunate we are to live in a time when electronic capabilities enable us to provide bibliographic references that will allow subsequent generations of scholars to find the materials they seek with no more than a few keystrokes.

Notes

1. The Leo Baeck Institute has three independent centers (Jerusalem, London, and New York). In April 1989, the joint executive council met in New York and called into life the Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft des LBI in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Academic Council of the LBI in the Federal Republic of Germany).

2. Rich, unknown archival holdings have been discovered in many repositories, such as Stralsund, one of the Hansa League, which contains approximately 270 separate folders documenting Jewish history from the 18th to the 20th centuries. In the lesser-known Brandenburg community of Angermünde, about 100 such files exist. Completion of this inventory (Grossaufnahme) is expected in 1994.

3. Helmut Eschwege, "Geschichte der Juden im Territorium der ehemaligen DDR [History of the Jews in the Former German Democratic Republic]," Archive of the Leo Baeck Institute, MS 253, especially vol. III, pp. 1332ff: "Deutsche Archive mit Unterlagen zur Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinden im Gebiet der ehemaligen DDR [German Archives with Documents of the History of the Jewish Communities in the Former German Democratic Republic]." Eschwege lists repositories by community, region, and the divisions of the centralized state archives. The latter have now been incorporated as divisions (*Abteilung*) of the Bundesarchiv (the Federal German Archives).

4. The "Führer durch jüdische Gemeindeverwaltung und Wohlfahrtspflege in Deutschland 1932/1933" is cited in the March 6, 1991 draft of the project proposal with these population figures for the new States. See Table 1.

5. Eschwege's complex listing shows that for some communities records appear in more than one archive; a local archive holding its own community's records is unusual.

6. In-Magic, a user-friendly database program which permits search under categories such as

title, biography of author, subject, and collection area, is used for the project.

7. Correspondence between Fred Grubel and Stefi Jersch-Wenzel in the active files of LBI, New York, includes the New York-suggested Thesaurus (May 12, 1992); Jersch-Wenzel's answer of May 22, 1992, especially p. 2.

8. Nathan Sznajder to Robert Jacobs, March 6, 1993, writes: "The materials from Schwerin ... open up new avenues of research regarding the conflict between reform and tradition. The letters written by congregations and individual teachers and cantors protesting [Samuel] Holdheim's rather authorita[rian] ways of imposing reform from above are a unique and rich source ..."

9. Although the latter is outside the collection policy of the LBI, it is included in the assembled data because the goal of the project is to open access to resources in the entire field of research on German Jewish history.

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