

# In-House Hebraica Card Production: The Experience of the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies\*

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## Introduction

In 1987, the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies began in-house computer-assisted production of Yiddish and Hebrew catalog cards. Bi-alphabetic cards were produced using only an IBM personal computer with a commercial Hebrew software package, without the local programming required for the Apple system at Hebrew Union College (Gilner et al., 1983). This article describes that experience, affording other Judaica librarians the opportunity to make an informed decision as to whether in-house Hebraica card production by computer is viable for their institutions.

## The Balch Institute

The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, located in the historic area of Philadelphia, documents and interprets the experiences in North America of the many ethnic groups that have immigrated to the United States. The Institute, with a staff of nearly twenty-five employees, is comprised of a museum, research library, and educational department. The library, with approximately 50,000 volumes in nearly forty languages, collects materials which describe the heritage, culture, and experiences of the many ethnic groups that came to the United States. Yiddish books comprise the largest single-language collection in the Institute.

The fact that much of the library's operating funds come from grants made it imperative that we achieve results on the Hebraica project at minimal cost and within a limited time period.

## Cataloging Systems

In deciding to produce Hebraica cards in the original alphabet, the Balch Institute was continuing the tradition of other Judaica libraries in the United States and Canada. Works in all other non-Roman alphabet languages are cataloged online on OCLC. The

majority of required Yiddish card sets can be and are ordered directly from the Library of Congress, but for those books which do not have any LC copy, the library decided to do original cataloging in a bi-alphabetic format on the LC model, using AACR2 and LC subject headings.

Author main entries are in the Roman alphabet, with the authorized heading established according to LC guidelines. The only major deviation from LC format is that we do not transliterate titles. In deciding not to include transliterated titles, we used the same rationale that initially persuaded us to catalog in the original script, i.e., the lack of unambiguous transliteration standards. We have a Yiddish-Hebrew title catalog to serve patrons searching for books by title.

One deviation with respect to LC subject headings: the Balch Institute Library categorizes every book by ethnic group, thus all Yiddish entries are represented under the subject heading "Jews."

## Hardware and Software

After investigating various possibilities for producing bilingual cards, among them English-Hebrew typewriters, we decided to purchase commercial bilingual Hebrew-English software. Several possibilities exist (Kuperman, 1987), and after examining the capabilities of several packages, we decided to purchase MINCE, which is manufactured by Davka in Chicago. There are several versions of MINCE, with and without vowels, and we chose the cheapest and least sophisticated model, called "Mark of the Unicorn," Version LQ, Serial no. 10038.

The Balch Institute has an M300 OCLC workstation which can also be used as an IBM personal computer. With a memory of 256K RAM, our computer more than met the minimal requirements for implementation of MINCE. According to the MINCE tutorial (p. 2-1), "MINCE requires an IBM-PC or 100% compatible computer with at least 128K of RAM and a standard graphics card"; however, Page (Fast-1) of the same manual states: "An IBM Color Graphics Card or compatible is required to display Hebrew characters unless you have installed a spe-

cial Hebrew character generator chip in your computer."

Originally, Davka sent us a chip to install in our board. This would have been the least expensive, most expedient way of achieving Hebrew character output; however, because our IBM computer is also an OCLC workstation, the slot for the Hebrew character-generating chip was already filled by our ALA character-generator chip. We therefore initially purchased an IBM-compatible standard graphics card. When this board did not generate Hebrew characters, Davka sent us a color graphics board which *should* have achieved the desired results. When this second board failed to generate Hebrew characters, Davka sent a monochrome video board, and after several months of trial and error, we were finally able to display Hebrew characters on the screen.

In early September 1986, at the same time that we purchased the MINCE software, we shipped our Epson FX 80 dot matrix printer to Davka, which installed a special chip to enable our printer to produce Hebrew characters; however, once the printer was returned to us and we finally had the proper monochrome graphics card installed, we were unable to print the bilingual Yiddish-English cards that were displayed on the screen. We were able to print documents in a single alphabet—either Hebrew or English—but the Epson could not print bi-alphabetic documents, which Yiddish catalog cards were, of course. After several additional frustrating months, we discovered that another more sophisticated printer located in the Institute, an Epson LQ-1000, could handle bi-alphabetic documents.

## Catalog Card Production

Printing directly onto library card stock would have been the most expedient way of producing the final copy. Unfortunately, standard library card stock could not be fed into our printer. We finally resorted to printing the final catalog record onto regular paper, which we then pasted onto card stock. Initially, we sent master copies of completed cards to Xerox Corporation, which reproduced the desired number of cards. We provided the card stock, and the card sets

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were produced at a cost of approximately \$.03 per card. The Institute's photocopier, the Xerox #1025, could not accommodate heavy card stock. We were later able to find thinner card stock that could be hand-fed into our Xerox machine, thus eliminating the middleman and producing all cards in-house.

### Work Flow

In addition to the various problems caused by incompatible hardware and photocopying difficulties, we also had to solve logistical problems. Since the Judaica Librarian was the only staff person who could read Hebrew characters, the physical production of the cards was done by a professional librarian rather than a Hebrew typist.

The process of card revision is extensive and as thorough as possible. Because we do not have the built-in checks for both card structure and cataloging rules which exist on OCLC, we print out the Yiddish-English entries a minimum of three times before producing the final master record. The entries are revised first by a professional librarian for mistakes in cataloging, LCSH, and Roman alphabet typos. They are then sent to Yiddish-speaking volunteers who check for mistakes in Yiddish. After all errors are corrected on the computer, another check is made by the Judaica librarian, and then the master record is printed out. The number of cards per set is determined by the number of subject headings and added entries.

Each card has a maximum of thirteen lines, leaving sufficient room to type subject headings on the final copies. Samples of author and title main entries as well as of a two-card set are reproduced in Figures 1-3. The library assistant types the appropriate subject headings, and the cards are integrated into the general catalog by author, subject, and ethnic group. Yiddish title cards are maintained in a separate section of the public catalog. We also maintain a file with copies of all our original cataloging in Yiddish which is sent periodically to the Library of Congress for deposit in the Union Catalog and which will, in the future, be disseminated to other Judaica libraries in the country through the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies.

### Evaluation

Is in-house Hebraica card production in a small library worthwhile? We at the Balch Institute felt that once the decision to catalog in the original alphabet had been made, and outside resources of catalog copy exhausted, we had to find an efficient method

HD 8039 .06 L5x	Liptsin, Sam, 1893- אמאל איז געווען : שפּיזאדן פון טוונט- שטאפ בילדער פון די גרינע יארן קאנץ פאר טרעיד-יוניאניזם אין אמעריקע / טעם ליפצין. — ניו-יארק : פארלאג "אמאל", 1951 264 p. ; ill., ports. ; 21 cm. 1. Trade-unions — United States. 2. Labor and laboring classes — United States. 3. Sweating systems. 4. Jews. I. Title.
72-8168	○

Figure 1. Author main entry card.

DK 251 .64x	גריגארי גערשוני : זיין לעבען און טעטיגקייט / רעדאקטירט פון וויקטאר טענערנאוו. — פילאדעלפיע : גערשוני בר. 153, ארבייטער רינג, 1934. 360 p. : ports. ; 23 cm. 1. Gershuni, Grigori Andreyevich, 1870-1908. 2. Revolutionists -- Soviet Union -- Biography. 3. Jews -- Biography. 4. Jews. I. Chernov, Vic- tor, ed.
85-1384	○

Figure 2. Title main entry card.

HS 2229 .P5 W5x 1933	Workmen's Circle (U.S.). Vladimir Medem Branch 124 (Philadelphia Pa.) געזעטע זעורנאל ארויסגעגעבן פון וויליאמיר געזעטע ברענשטע 124, ארבייטער רינג, לכבוד זעם צען יעזריגען יובילעאום / ל. קעטנער, רעדאק- טאר. — פילאדעלפיע : [s.n.], 1933. 96 p. : ill., ports. ; 28 cm. On cover: Tenth Anniversary : Vladimir Medem Branch One Twenty-Four, Workmen's Circle. See next card ○
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HS 2229 .P5 W569x 1933	Workmen's Circle (U.S.). Vladimir Medem Branch 124 (Philadelphia, Pa.) (Card 2) ... געזעטע זעורנאל 1. Workmen's Circle (U.S.). Vladimir Medem Branch 124 (Philadelphia, Pa.) — Anniversaries, etc. 2 Jews — Philadelphia (Pa.) — Societies, etc. 3. Philadelphia (Pa.) — Ethnic groups — Societies, etc. 4. Jews. I. Title.
87-70	○

Figure 3. Corporate main entry—two card set.

of card production for our original cataloging.

In retrospect, the difficulties which we encountered during every step of the process would have discouraged any staff; however, our determination to produce bilingual card sets by computer was so strong, and both our emotional and financial investment so deep, that we pursued this venture until we achieved our objective. Production of over 350 card sets was accomplished within one year by a staff of three, which should be a heartening prospect for small Judaica libraries.

We hope that this report on the technical difficulties we experienced will be helpful to other librarians. The economic and staff

restraints we had to work under would not necessarily apply to larger libraries. Certain steps of our revision process may be eliminated by larger libraries. All the difficulties notwithstanding, we feel that our bi-alphabetic cards enhance both the quality and accessibility of our Hebraica collection and, ultimately, will benefit the researchers who use them.

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