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Retrospective Conversion of Hebraica at Brandeis University*

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Introduction

At Brandeis, many of our decisions regarding retrospective conversion of our Hebraica catalog to machine-readable form were made in the highly charged atmosphere of library-wide automation. In the Fall of 1984, about 350,000 bibliographic records, or close to 90% of our general collection, were already online when the circulation module of our local GEAC integrated system came up. The bibliographic system, the online catalog, and the acquisitions system followed the circulation system in December (1984), April (1985), and July (1985) respectively. Our totally integrated library system, Library Online User Information System, known affectionately as LOUIS—remember: we are named for Justice Brandeis—was a reality.

That is, it was a reality for some. While Brandeis' general catalogers were using OCLC and GEAC for bibliographic entry, manual production of cards was still the rule for the Hebraica section. Moving from there to an online environment seemed a distant dream.

This brief presentation concentrates on how we moved to cataloging Hebraica online and on the decisions that had to be made and that we are making along the way. A brief "show-and-tell" i.e., a description of what-are-we-really-doing-now, follows.

Standards

Before seeking financial support for the project, we decided upon our basic bibliographic standard: we wanted to preserve the Hebraic vernacular script in our online record; anything less would not have served our constituency of users. Brandeis therefore joined the Research Libraries Group as a special member to utilize the expected Hebraic capability. Credit must be given to the Research Libraries Information Network for working on the intricacies of this software program, now (June 1987) in its very last stages of development; the Hebraic

capability is scheduled to be installed in production at the end of this year. Brandeis, the Library of Congress, and the New York Public Library will be the first group to use this new system.

Our online cataloging standards are identical to those applied in our manual procedures: AACR2 and Library of Congress Subject Headings. For retrospective conversion, we use the guidelines established by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and the Research Libraries Group (RLG). For romanization, we follow the Library of Congress Hebraic romanization tables.

The application of these national standards to our local GEAC system was essential. The general retrospective conversion project at Brandeis on OCLC also prepared us for the Hebraic online project on RLIN. I was in charge of "the remainders of retro," that is, of the general retrospective conversion project, after the GEAC system came up. This sharpened my senses to the requirements and needs of a retro project and especially to its relationship to our local online system. Our ultimate goal for the Hebraic retrospective conversion project is to load the RLIN records containing Hebrew script into our local GEAC system in order to create a local online system which will meet the needs of users of both the general and Hebraic collections.

Our GEAC integrated online system demands consistency among library functions, i.e., circulation, online catalog, and bibliographic functions, and we in Hebraica had to be aware of this. In fact, we have been using the GEAC automated circulation system since its beginnings. General library policy has demanded that each circulating item be barcoded and recorded in the circulation database. Since GEAC circulation began, approximately 7500 Hebraic volumes out of a total of about 40,000 Hebraic volumes in the Brandeis collection have circulated and, consequently, are already represented in our circulation system—but only in a brief romanized form. In other words, an author/title/call number record has been put into the GEAC circulation system for any circulating item which was not in the Brandeis main database, including Hebrew materials. We want our fully-tagged MARC records from RLIN to re-

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place these brief GEAC circulation records eventually.

Finance

No retrospective conversion project can be accomplished in a timely fashion without proper funding. In addition to national and local cataloging and systems standards, finance is the major hurdle to overcome at the beginning of a project which requires such a significant investment of time, hardware, and staffing. The generosity of the Pew Memorial Trust is making this possible at Brandeis. Its grant will aid not only the Hebraica project on RLIN, but also the authority project for our online catalog, currently being worked on with UTLAS, a Toronto-based utility. We expect that this authority project will support our long-range goal of an integrated online system for Hebraic records.

The Current Project

This, then, is the general outline of what existed at Brandeis in August 1986 when we purchased our two IBM-AT terminals with an RLIN emulator program. Basically, we were using the GEAC circulation system and manually producing and processing cards. At this juncture, our Hebraica retrospective conversion project had not been formally presented to, or approved of, by RLG. It became clear, very soon, however, that forces beyond our control would prevent us from seeing Hebrew online during 1986.

Nonetheless, bound to a time-limited grant, we were anxious to make use of our hardware and our staffing, and especially to gain as much experience as we could on RLIN even before the Hebrew capability became available. We therefore decided to use as much romanized copy as we could find in the RLIN database and to hold the Hebraic data for later input and upgrading of the record to fullest roman and non-roman standards.

The advantages were clear: we would stop typing cards; we would be inputting the romanized portions of the parallel fields; we would gain valuable experience in tagging, input, and online cataloging; we would be adding the Hebrew data to fully-tagged records shortly after the vernacular became available, providing us very quickly with a significant number of fully tagged vernacular records. Because Brandeis was working in an online atmosphere, the decision to stop typing cards was easier to make than in non-automated libraries. Our card catalog is already slated to be removed at some not-too-distant date; it is hard to imagine that any library could long maintain two systems.

Temporary Collection

How would we begin the conversion process? First, we decided not to start retrospective conversion in the conventional fashion, i.e., primarily using the shelflist for searching and input. At the time the project began, we did not expect to get too many "hits" for catalog copy. Instead, we are now converting our temporary cataloged collection, which consists of about 3000 titles. This collection represents imprints from 1981 to 1987, many of which we correctly suspected would be online in romanized form. This 'Temp' collection, as we call it, is arranged by number of receipt, with an author slip filed into our main catalog, and a title slip filed by Hebraic vernacular title in our Hebraic title catalog.

In searching the RLIN database, we are finding usable copy for approximately 30 to 40 percent of the titles. Princeton, Michigan, and Cornell are, to date, the primary contributors, in addition to the Library of Congress. The most frequent editing done on non-LC records is correcting the romanization, changing call numbers, editing subject headings to reflect local practice, and adding additional subject fields. All authority work is done online or, if not found, through our local Hebraica authority card file. Unless we find a variant LC Name Authority File record online, we maintain the entry that we have already established.

In order to have the Hebraic data readily available for eventual input on RLIN, we photocopy the Hebrew title page and any publishing or series data that we will need. Our intention is to provide parallel romanized and vernacular fields not only for the mandatory "core fields" in the body of the descriptive entry (title, 245; edition, 250; imprint, 260; and series, 4xx), but also for main and name added entries (fields 100 and 700). [We have not yet made a decision on adding parallel vernacular fields to corporate, conference, or uniform title headings]. The inclusion of these additional access points supports the basic theory that vernacular author searches are a valuable retrieval strategy for Hebraic records. Eventually, we hope to be able to achieve authority control for the vernacular headings. Other groups, such as the RLG East Asian Cataloging Subcommittee, are also very interested in this concept.

The titles from our 'Temp' collection for which no contributed copy is found will be entered into the RLIN database at base level (minimal level) cataloging standard, that is author, title, publisher, and physical description in addition to all the fixed fields. We will also use a special RLIN fixed field to request notification should a more complete record be loaded into the RLIN database. Just as

in the case of books for which online copy is found, we keep all vernacular Hebraic data for input when the Hebraic capability is available.

Barcodes

Finding online copy and maintaining the Hebraic data are two aspects of what we are doing in converting our temporary cataloged collection to online records. There is a third part—and that is including the barcode in the online record. As mentioned above, our automated circulation system requires that each item be barcoded, including Hebraica. We include the barcode in our online MARC record by wanding in the barcode right at the RLIN terminal [using the CAERE Corp. bar code scanner]. Our RLIN profile conveniently allows us to have the barcode printed out on the shelflist card.

The use of barcodes has generated additional local system concerns in this retrospective conversion project. To prepare for the local system matching of our records, we have now begun to correct input errors on Hebraic brief records in our GEAC circulation system. As you may be aware, an integrated system demands exact identification of records in transferring from one module (bibliographic) to another (circulation). We have found that certain types of errors on the circulation record will prevent the full record from replacing the brief. This is particularly true for multi-volume sets, where not all volumes were entered into circulation at the same time. To avoid future problems, and reams of error printouts, we are trying to deal with this now by correcting the brief Hebraic circulation records—before the full records are loaded from RLIN.

The following are the various parts of our project described so far:

- using romanized data found in the RLIN database;
- saving Hebraic bibliographic data for later input;
- processing our 'Temp' collection of 1981–1987 imprints (ca. 3000 titles);
- barcoding each item and incorporating that information into our online record and our shelflist card;
- correcting input errors found on our 'brief' GEAC circulation records for Hebraica [once again, about 7500 records] in preparation for downloading our RLIN tapes into our local GEAC system.

This has been the beginning. To arrive at this point, we had to carefully analyze our cataloging workflow in order to effect a smooth change from manually typing cards to producing online records. Our staff worked on a detailed flow-chart for catalog-

ing and authority control and, after numerous meetings, we revised, deleted, and changed many cataloging procedures. Our procedures continue to change as we learn more about the RLIN system, its potential, and its effects on our staff. We have tried to address the general issue of the effects of automation on staff by involving our staff in decision-making, a lesson we first learned when the GEAC system was installed.

Because of our familiarity with OCLC and GEAC, the change from manual card production has not been traumatic [for example, no one has missed filing cards], and now, barely three months after intensive RLIN training, we are using the RLIN system with more and more confidence.

Future Plans

After completing the retrospective conversion of our temporary collection, we expect to continue retro using shelflist cards. Because we are aware of RLG's request to load the romanized tapes from the Harvard College Library into the RLIN database, we hope to have access to those records as well. We expect that the Hebraic capability will be available at that time and that we will be adding the Hebraic script not only to the records we cataloged this summer [from our 'Temp' collection] but also to the records

which we will find online as we work through the shelflist.

As noted earlier, Brandeis has a total of approximately 40,000 Hebraic volumes. At the time of retro, we will include a barcode for each volume in our record on the RLIN system for eventual downloading into our local system. Therefore, another aspect of our project is barcoding the Hebrew volumes which have not yet gone through this process. As of June 1, only the 7500 Hebraic records that had circulated had barcodes. We have been using duplicate barcodes, one on the volume itself and one in a card file of barcodes in LC call number order. Since June 1, an additional 8000 Hebraic volumes have been barcoded. We fully expect to complete this part of our project by the end of the summer.

These then are two additional aspects of our complete project:

- barcoding all the volumes in the Hebraica collection, and
- planning for the use of Harvard's romanized tapes when we begin to retrospectively convert Hebraica materials using our shelflist.

GEAC and RLIN

As mentioned earlier, our ultimate goal is

to integrate our soon-to-be vernacular/roman Hebraica records into our GEAC system. Without proper programming, no local system can even store the Hebraic vernacular, let alone display, retrieve, and edit vernacular records. We are now in the process of writing a Request For Proposal describing our needs for a local system to integrate non-roman records. Charles Cutter, Judaica Librarian, Hedy Haas, Head of the Cataloging section, and I have been working with our Systems Librarian, Ivy Anderson and now have a draft document ready. We expect to have a final version to present to GEAC in the very near future.

Finally, we have examined a prototype of the RLIN Hebraic system and have found it very easy to use. Because the direction of the fields can be either left-to-right or right-to-left, we were able to input Hebrew with ease. While Brandeis, LC, and NYPL will be the first to use this new system, we know that the Research Libraries Group will schedule others for training soon afterward based on availability of time. Let me invite you all to join us in creating this unique database of Hebraic vernacular records.

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