

ARCHIVES

Establishing Archives in Synagogue or Center Libraries

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Scope of the Archives

Your library is full of stories and history. Your community is full of stories and history. Each individual, family, organization, and business is a book waiting to be written. An archives of your community will make these stories a part of history to be written. As a librarian, you can begin to develop an archives, and will soon find it to be one of the most interesting aspects of your work.

Once you and your institution have decided to begin an archives, you will need to decide on the scope of the collection. If you are a synagogue or center librarian, you may choose to collect only the records of your particular institution: yearbooks, bulletins, minute books, correspondence, publicity, photographs, skits, deeds, charters of incorporation, financial records, cemetery records, rabbis' books of marriages, circumcisions, deaths, membership records, etc. You might want to expand the scope to include documents pertaining to your members, such as diaries; scrapbooks; birth, death, marriage, and immigration certificates; genealogies and family trees; oral histories; and photographs. You must set up a records management program with the staff and lay leadership of your institution. The archives should be on its distribution list to receive all current mailings. "All that paper," you might say, but reserve the right to throw away notices for meetings already reported in the bulletin or minutes. Save information, but only once. Remember, what happens today will be history tomorrow.

Budget and Supplies

After you have compiled a written collection policy, you need to get a commitment from your institution to maintain the archives as an ongoing part of your library. This will prevent your successor from deciding that more space is needed for books and tossing out the archives. Along with the commitment to continue the archives, you should request a small budget. If you are to be the staff person (in addition to your

other duties), the main budgetary needs will be supplies, after the initial capital expenditure for physical site. \$500 should cover the initial supplies suggested below.

Now that you have a collection policy and a commitment from your agency combined with a budget, you will need an area to be used as a repository. The archives may be housed in the library, preferably in a secure area such as a closet or workroom. It should be used only under supervision. The following specifications are suggested:

1. Metal shelving (wood is acidic, but can be lined with mylar), with each shelf 12" deep and 13" high to accommodate boxes. A shelf unit 18" deep will hold oversize boxes.
2. Controlled lighting—away from sunlight and with ultraviolet shields on fluorescent fixtures.
3. Constant temperature of 65 degrees or less.
4. Constant humidity (unfluctuating) of 40/50%. You may need a humidifier or dehumidifier (Walch, 1977).
5. A vermin-free area.

Certain basic supplies can be ordered during the start-up phase. Most library supply houses have archival products, but The Hollinger Corporation is an especially good source (3810 South Four Mile Run Drive, P.O. Box 6185, Arlington, Virginia 22206).

An initial order of archival supplies might include:

1. 60 clam shell file boxes (acid-free, legal size, 15¼" x 10¼" x 5").
2. 2 flat drop-front oversize print boxes (24½" x 20½" x 3") for large items.
3. 500 legal-size archival file folders.
4. Multi-use envelopes for photographs and negatives: 100 4½" x 5½", 100 6" x 9", 100 9" x 12".
5. 8" x 12" acid-free paper for interleaving fading documents.
6. 2 boxes of #1 pencils, 1 box of plastic paper clips.

Encouraging Contributions

Now you are ready to start collecting. Announcements in the local Jewish press, your institution's house organs, and word of mouth will tell the community of your endeavors. An archives committee, made up of representatives of the various committees of your agency, or—if you have a broader collection policy (the total Jewish community)—representatives of all the organizations in the community, will help publicize the archives and can also help bring in documents. Organize a photo exhibit, asking members to bring old photographs of synagogue or center activities. This exhibit can act as a kickoff for the archives. Encourage contributors to deposit these photographs in the archives, or at least to have them copied for your archives. Be sure each visitor to the exhibit receives a simple letter or brochure introducing the archives and listing types of materials to be collected.

Processing

Now that the documents are pouring in, how do you arrange them? Archives, unlike libraries, do not arrange materials by subject, but rather by *provenance*, i.e., their origin or source, e.g., the organization that created them.

First, you need to set up some sort of system to identify the large groups. If you are a synagogue archives, designate the natural divisions of the congregation as record groups, e.g., RG 1 (Board of Directors), RG 2 (Religious School), RG 3 (Sisterhood). These categories can be expanded to include rabbis, families, or whatever suggests itself as a logical grouping. For a Federation archives, the following divisions might be used: RG 1 (Jewish Federation); RG 2 (Jewish Community Center); RG 3 (Jewish Family Services). Then, for the rest of the community, you might use codes for manuscript collections; e.g., MS 1 (Sherith Israel Synagogue); small collections (folder size, several to a box), can be coded SC 1 (George Cohen family), etc.

As each group of records is delivered to you, accession it (see Fig. 1). The accession book lists in sequential order the number of a collection, the name of the donor, a brief synopsis of the contents, and the date received. This record serves the same function as a library accession book. The accession number is then marked on the collection box or folder, and later, when the collection is being processed, on each item in the collection.

The collection should be transferred to a clean container: either a file storage box (10" x 12" x 15") for large collections, or, in the case of small collections, several can be put in one file storage box until you are able to process them. Remove the items from the box, shopping or grocery bag, plastic bag, or whatever the collection arrived in. This will cut down on the possibility of vermin such as silverfish, roaches, etc.

Send the donor a thank-you letter. A form letter can be run off minus address and salutation (Fig. 2). Note in the accession book that a thank-you letter has been sent.

The basis of arrangement of the collection can vary. The original order is preferred, but if it obviously has been random, chronological arrangement is one alternative; alphabetical, another. Assign the documents to the proper collection numbering series (RG, MS, or SC). Discard duplicates or national publications, unless they mention local individuals. Photographs may be kept with the collection, although some archives keep

photographs together in a separate collection.

Remove all rubber bands, metal paper clips (substitute plastic clips), staples (a staple remover is destructive; a simple metal spatula or fingernail is safer), and any tape which can safely be lifted. Put items in acid-free file folders (labeled with collection title and accession number). Stamp items with acid-free ink (available from the Library of Congress Preservation Department). Unfold all papers, unless brittle. Put photographs and negatives in acid-free envelopes. Label and date (be sure to write only with #1 pencil; the only time ink can be used is on the slick surface of the back of a photograph which will not take pencil). Photocopying newsprint will make the paper size uniform and preserve the articles. Put the items in an acid-free clamshell box. Label. These are basic processing suggestions. For more information, consult the SAA Manual *Archives and Manuscripts: Conservation* (see Bibliography).

Access to the Collection

Additional internal finding aids—beyond the accession book—include accession cards (filed numerically) and donor cards (filed alphabetically by donor's last name) (see Figures 3 and 4). Gift agreements (Fig. 5) are important if your archives collects outside of your institution, or collects oral histories (Fig. 6). For reference service, an alphabetical card file (index) of collection titles

(main entries for persons or organizations) is essential. Key names other than collection titles may be included. Detailed descriptions of collections are provided in inventories.

For more sophisticated finding aids, a simple computer program can be developed, or a database management system may be purchased. Figure 7 suggests some fields for such a program.

Archives are not browsing collections, and should be used only under staff supervision. Photocopying may be permitted under certain conditions. A user log and user card should be prepared (Fig. 8). The amount of time you can spend assisting patrons depends on your local situation.

Grants for starting an archives are available from such agencies as the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (National Archives Building, Washington, DC 20408); Nashville's Jewish Archives benefited from such a grant (Marcus, 1983). It is possible to begin very simply, however, and to develop your own finding aids, as long as they make information in the collection retrievable.

Consultants are available, and the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies (330 Seventh Avenue, 21st Floor, New York, NY 10001) can help. The main thing you need is a strong commitment from your agency. Your contribution to Jewish learning will live on in your library if you succeed in establishing archives of your institution and community.

ACC. Number	Donor	Description and Restrictions	Date Access.	Gift Agreement Sent	Gift Agreement Returned
614	Sig Held	Israel bond co-chairs, Joe Kraft Israel Bond presentation, 1986: proof sheets and negatives	10/86	1/30/87	2/12/87
615	Sylvia Ruskin	Snapshot of Michael & Kitty Schweizer at Holocaust Day 1986	11/86	2/2/87	2/6/87
616	Rae Levine	Photos of 1984 Ralph Shepard awards banquet	11/3/86	—	—
617	Wayne Renardson	Tape and transcript, clippings of Walburga Von Raffler-Engel's Holocaust experiences	12/11/86	2/12/87	2/17/87
618	Sigmund Held	Photographic negatives of Rabbis Glazer, Falk, Posner, 1983	12/30/86	2/10/87	2/20/87
619	Mrs. Louis Binstock	Letters re Lefkowitz-Atlas families	1984-86	—	—
620	Ed Stolman	1915 clipping of article about West End Synagogue (Gay St.)	11/11/86	—	—
621	Sarah Orr	Copy of Beatrice Haas Lack's birth certificate, 11/16/1898	1/12/87	—	—

Figure 1. Page from Archives Accession Book.

References

- Marcus, Richard W. "Nashville Jewish Archives." *Judaica Librarianship*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Fall 1983), p. 16.
- Walch, Timothy. *Archives & Manuscripts: Security*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977. (Basic Manual Series.)

Bibliography

- Preservation Leaflets*. no. 1- , 1975- . Washington, DC. Irregular. A National Preservation Program Publication, each leaflet in this series addresses a specific topic in the preservation of library and archival materials. Published irregularly and available free of charge from the Preservation Office, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540.
- Society of American Archivists. *Basic Manual Series*: "Approval and Accessioning," "Arrangement and Description," "Reference and Access," "Security," "Surveys," "Conservation," and *Religious Archives: An Introduction*. Order from: Society of American Archivists, 600 South Federal Street, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605.

JEWISH FEDERATION OF NASHVILLE & MIDDLE TENNESSEE

801 PERCY WARNER BOULEVARD • NASHVILLE,
TENNESSEE 37205 • PHONE (615) 356-3242

The material you presented to the Archives of the Jewish Federation of Nashville has been received with gratitude. Your addition to our collection enhances the importance of the Archives as documentation of the long and colorful history of the Nashville Jewish community. We hope you will visit the Archives often, and will continue to deposit organizational and business records, personal papers, and photographs.

Sincerely,

Figure 2. Acknowledgment Form Letter.

NASHVILLE JEWISH FEDERATION — Archive Record —

Main Entry

Primary collection (can include box number)

Accession numbers.

Secondary collections.

Number of collection containing a photograph.

Does main entry pertain to the following organizations/institutions? If so, a "Y" for YES is entered:

CJW = Council of Jewish Women
HAD = Hadassah
TEM = The Temple
WES = West End Synagogue
SIS = Sherith Israel Synagogue
FED = Jewish Federation
JCC = Jewish Community Center
AKI = Akiva School
JFS = Jewish Family Service
WCC = Woodmont Country Club

Figure 7. Sample Fields for an Archives Database Management Program.

Figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 are on the following pages.

On the Cover

- Center: A cartoon from the *Nashville Y.M.H.A. News*, September, 1933, which summarizes (inaccurately) some key Jewish events in Nashville. The three congregations pictured in the bottom row are still in existence.
- Upper Left: Abe Tohrner came to New York from Poland in 1883. He planned to go to Meridian, Mississippi, but stayed in Nashville because of yellow fever in Mississippi. He opened a store in Franklin, Tennessee. His son Martin (born in 1889 in Franklin) and daughter Anna are in the wagon.
- Upper Right: The first Reform congregation in Nashville was B'nai Yeshurun, founded in 1864. Its first Confirmation class, in 1869, included Hannah Spitz, Emma Feldman, Hattie Shyer, and Samuel Weil, with Rabbi Judah Wechsler officiating. The congregation ceased to exist in the middle of the 1870s.
- Lower Right: Married in 1838 in Germany, Nathan Hirsch and his wife and large family were brought to Nashville by their son Joseph in the late 1860s. Nathan's grandson and great-grandson are still active in the Nashville Jewish community.
- Lower Left: Wedding portrait of Mary Levy and Philip Marks (Markson), August 3, 1884, in Nashville, Tennessee. They were both newly arrived immigrants from Lithuania. At first, they peddled merchandise in West Tennessee. Soon they moved to Jackson, Tennessee, where he became a successful retail merchant.

Reproduced with the permission of the Archives of the Jewish Federation of Nashville.

(Front)

Title: _____ Acc. #: _____

Donor: _____

Received	Physical Description	Location

(Back)

PROCESSING RECORD

Date Initials Remarks

LOCATION AND RESTRICTIONS:

SIZE:

Figure 3. Accession Card for a Collection.

DONOR CARD

Name: _____ Acc. #: _____

Address: _____ Date: _____

Material:

Disposition:

Restrictions:

Figure 4. Donor Card.

Acc. # _____

JEWISH FEDERATION OF NASHVILLE AND MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Gift Agreement

I, the owner, or the agent with full authority, give the papers of _____ and all rights and interest therein to the Archives of the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee. I agree that these papers should be made available for scholarly research, and that photocopies may be made for individuals, libraries, and other institutions.

Accepted for the Archives

Signature of Donor

Acknowledgment:

Signature of Agent

Notes:

Address:

Disposition:

Date:

Description:

Figure 5. Gift Agreement Form.

JEWISH FEDERATION OF NASHVILLE AND MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Release Form

I, _____, knowingly and voluntarily give the tape recording(s), the contents, and all rights and interest therein to the Archives of the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee for whatever purposes it determines. I agree that the tape(s) and transcripts thereof should be made available for scholarly research, and that copies may be made for individuals, libraries, and other institutions.

Accepted for Archives

Signature of interviewer

Signature of narrator

Address of interviewer

Address of narrator

Disposition:

Date:

Description:

Figure 6. Oral History Release Form.

(Front)

**ARCHIVES
JEWISH FEDERATION OF NASHVILLE & MIDDLE TENNESSEE**

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

I.D. #: _____

Statement of Rules:

Anyone may use unrestricted materials if an Archives staff member is present. Researchers may make one photocopy of unrestricted materials for scholarly purposes. Archival materials may not be removed for reproduction or exhibits without permission of the Archives staff.

For use of Archives and Manuscripts, please complete the other side.

(Back)

ARCHIVES AND MANUSCRIPT USE

Name & number of collection: _____

Register number: _____

Box number: _____ File: _____

Subject of Research: _____

Purpose of research (paper, thesis, article, book, other . . .) please specify:

I have read the rules and restrictions of the Archives of the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee and agree to abide by them.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Figure 8. Archives User Card.

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