

COMMENTARIES

IN THE BEGINNING (Continued)

In times of financial crisis, libraries often experience budgetary cutbacks. In the general library literature, one sometimes reads of politicians categorizing libraries as unnecessary cultural frills. In the Judaica community, we enjoy a much greater degree of respect for books, libraries, and learning—which protects us from such attitudes, but which cannot, of course, guarantee full financial support. Administrators of libraries must deal with the difficult question of the percentage of resources to allocate to materials vs. staff.

No one enters Judaica librarianship for the money. It is for the thrill of working with subject matter you love and the satisfaction of using the languages and knowledge you have acquired. There are many devoted volunteers in this field, without whom numerous school and synagogue libraries could not function.

Our journal, *Judaica Librarianship*, is a volunteer effort as well, a publication designed to represent the profession and enhance its image. The increasing flow of high-quality manuscripts to our offices from all segments of the Judaica library community serves as evidence of the vitality of the field and of excellent career prospects for those who choose to enter this exciting and rewarding profession.

Dear Bella and Marcia:

Kudos to the both of you upon the appearance of the latest issue of JL. It is a wonderful issue containing something for everyone. The articles range from the technical to the practical, from the scholarly to the just plain interesting and informative.

With cordial best wishes, both professionally and personally, for the New Year.

*Sincerely,
Harvey P. Horowitz
Librarian
Frances-Henry Library
Hebrew Union College—
Jewish Institute of Religion
Los Angeles, CA*

Children's Literature

To the Editors:

Many thanks to Rachel Meir for an excellent article on "Introducing Holocaust Literature to Children." She presents the unique problems generic to writing about the Holocaust as well as provides insights to the perception and psychological needs of a child absorbing such information.

Editing as diverse and comprehensive a journal such as this is no easy task, and my commendations to the editors for a superb job.

*Sincerely,
Fayge Safran
Editor, TEN DAAT
Torah Education Network
An affiliate of Yeshiva University
New York, NY*

Rare Books

To Our Readers:

It has been brought to the attention of the editors that a full version of Israel Mehlman's paper, "What Makes a Hebrew Book Rare?" (of which we published excerpts with notes by Menahem Schmelzer in JL vol. 3) appeared in the *Jewish Book Annual* [JBA] Volume 39 (1981-1982) in an anonymous translation under the title "What Makes Antique Hebrew Books So Rare?"

There are several ironic aspects to this discovery. First, several members of JL's Editorial Board are also on the Editorial Advisory Board of JBA as listed in vol. 39. The *Jewish Book Annual* is surely found in the libraries of all members of JL's Editorial Board, and yet none recalled this prior publication.

Second, the editors of JL had written to the Jewish National & University Library, publisher of the Hebrew book in which Mehlman's essay on rare books originally appeared, to request permission to publish the translated excerpts; JNUL did not mention in its response that such permission had previously been granted. (JBA cited the original source, but does not indicate that publication of the translation was authorized by the publisher.)

Could a systematic search have identified the prior translation? JBA is not indexed by the *American Index to Jewish Periodicals*, but is covered by the selective Israeli tool *Index of Articles on Jewish Studies*, known

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by its Hebrew acronym RaMBI. Mehlman's paper in JBA was indeed cited in volume 22 (1982) of RaMBI as item 37 in the section on "History of Printing, Publishing and Periodicals," and indexed by author. Since RaMBI is not cumulated, one would have had to search numerous issues following the publication of the original Hebrew book in 1976 to determine whether this particular essay had appeared in translation in a journal or collective volume.

Since the original version appeared in book form, one might reasonably have sought a translation of the entire collection of Mehlman's essays. The tool that records translations in book form is *Index Translationum*, published by UNESCO. This annual reference work is not found in most Judaica libraries, but any book of Jewish interest—original or translated—is, in theory, recorded in *Kiryat Sefer*, the bibliographical quarterly of the Jewish National & University Library. The indexes to this tool are, like those of RaMBI, not cumulated.

It is also conceivable that an unpublished translation of Mehlman's paper (or of other Hebrew articles of interest to Judaica librarians) may have been produced. American technical translations should be deposited with the National Translations Center housed at the John Crerar Library in Chicago, which publishes the *Translations Register Index*. The international counterpart of this tool is *World Transindex*.

The lesson of this oversight is that we underutilize our own bibliographic resources as well as general reference tools, relying excessively on our own memories and underestimating the number of prior publications in the field of Judaica librarianship.

The final irony of this incident is that in the same issue as the Mehlman paper, we published a letter by Dr. Jacob Kabakoff, editor of the *Jewish Book Annual*, in which he expressed the desire to "lift" several JL articles for his own serial! Although guilty neither of plagiarism nor violation of copyright, we acknowledge and regret the oversight. Awareness of the JBA version would have saved JL's translator and editors a great deal of time and effort in verifying that the sense of the original was preserved, and that the Romanization of titles of rare Hebraica as well as the spelling of places of publication were correct.

Through the publication of this letter, the two versions of Mehlman's paper in English are now bibliographically related. They are complementary in that JBA published the full version, while JL selected the components most relevant to Judaica librarians, and through Dr. Schmelzer's notes, linked

criteria for rarity to the management of rare book collections.

We resolve to do more thorough bibliographic research before publishing translations in future issues. We hope our readers will forgive the oversight in JL's first published translation of a classic paper.

Bella Hass Weinberg
Co-Editor

Reference Department

To the Editors:

The article by Mitchell A. Cahan, "Jewish Medical Ethics," *Judaica Librarianship* 3 (1986/87): 120–24 contains a couple of factual errors (on p. 120) which should be corrected:

1. *Maimonides (1135–1204) lived in Fez with his family from 1159–1165. He was still quite young then and not involved in communal activities. He probably received most of his medical training in Fez, but was certainly not yet experienced enough to minister in the royal court. He did serve later on in his life as physician to Saladin's vizier in Cairo.*
2. *The Shulhan 'arukh was first printed in 1565, not 1535 as cited in the article.*

Barry Walfish
University of Toronto Library

Dear Editors:

We read with interest Mitchell A. Cahan's article, "Jewish Medical Ethics: Issues, Sources, and the Librarian's Role" in Vol. 3, No. 1–2, 1986–1987 of *Judaica Librarianship*.

We would like to clarify several entries in the "Appendix: Additional Resources for a Collection on Jewish Medical Ethics":

- *The Bibliography of Bioethics (Washington, DC: Kennedy Institute of Ethics) was first published in 1975. It is issued as an annual volume, and Vol. 13 was published in 1987 by, and is now available from, the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University, Washington, DC 20057.*
- *The Bibliography is the print form of an online data base, BIOETHICSLINE, which is produced by the Kennedy Institute of Ethics for the MEDLARS computerized retrieval system of the National Library of Medicine. Information about searching BIOETHICSLINE and free searches on Jewish ethics, particularly bioethical issues, can be obtained from the Institute by telephoning 800-MEETHX, or by mail.*

Incidentally, the *Journal of Bioethics* has again changed its name. It is, beginning with Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring/Summer 1985, the *Journal of Medical Humanities and Bioethics*.

We would appreciate your bringing these corrections to the attention of your readers.

Yours truly,
Frances Amitay Abramson
Bibliographer
Joseph & Rose Kennedy
Institute of Ethics
Georgetown University
Washington, DC