

# CATALOG DEPARTMENT

***Hebraica Cataloging: a Guide to ALA/LC Romanization and Descriptive Cataloging.***  
Prepared by Paul Maher. Washington, DC: Cataloging Distribution Service, Library of Congress, 1987.\*

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## Background

Prior to the era of shared cataloging utilities, individual libraries established their own cataloging practices, and, as long as rules were followed consistently within each library, the system functioned. When cataloging networks were created in the 1970s, the need arose for all member libraries to follow common procedures. The word "standardization" surfaced. The reason behind this was clear. Shared cataloging would not be possible unless all participating libraries applied the same cataloging rules. The resultant changes within individual libraries were often drastic and, without doubt, painful. Libraries switched to the Library of Congress (LC) classification system, they adopted the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules (AACR, 1967)* for descriptive cataloging, and so on.

Being committed to shared cataloging on a national network means, as in marriage, "for better or for worse." When cataloging rules change, they change for everybody. So, when in 1978, the American Library Association, the Canadian Library Association, and the [British] Library Association co-published the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition (AACR2, 1978)* we all had to adapt again. New rules were learned and applied, and changes to our catalogs continue to be made ever since.

Because the bibliographic utilities' computers were programmed to handle Roman script only, libraries that owned materials in languages written in non-Roman characters—such as Hebrew, Arabic, Chinese, or Cyrillic—had to make a major cataloging decision, choosing from the following two options:

- a) to enter only Western European language records into the computer, and to

catalog all works in other scripts manually, or

- b) to enter *all* library records into the database, which meant that those in non-Roman scripts would be entered in romanized form.

Libraries choosing the second option did so for the sake of efficiency in cataloging and the creation of one database for the whole collection. Amnon Zipin's article (Zipin, 1984) describes Ohio State University Libraries' decision to opt for this alternative.

Many libraries, however, decided to split their cataloging efforts, and continued to catalog their non-Roman script materials separately, in the vernacular. This decision was based mainly upon the conviction that library users are better served with cataloging records in the original alphabet. The fact that staff would not have to romanize was an added bonus. Another advantage was that libraries would have the luxury of applying in-house rules in the area of vernacular cataloging, when these rules seemed better suited than national ones for their users.

The advantages of shared cataloging outweigh the pleasures of in-house cataloging practices, and we all very much appreciate and welcome the efforts and success of the Research Libraries Group (RLG) and Prof. Bella Weinberg in developing and implementing the Research Libraries Information Network's (RLIN's) Hebrew capability, even if it means learning and applying new rules once more.

To help us with this endeavor, Paul Maher of the Library of Congress prepared the booklet *Hebraica Cataloging: a Guide to ALA/LC Romanization and Descriptive Cataloging*. The largest portion of the work deals with Hebrew and Yiddish romanization. Another major part deals with LC's rule interpretations concerning Hebraica cataloging. That chapter is followed by one describing applicable portions of LC's own *Descriptive Cataloging Manual*. The fourth chapter contains a list of *Hebraica Cataloging Reference Aids*.

## Romanization

Romanization is crucial to inputting Hebrew records into RLIN, because, unlike previous practices, we are now asked to input parallel core fields, in the vernacular *and* in romanization (Aliprand, 1987, p. 9–10). The reason for this is: Many libraries belonging to RLG—especially those for which Hebrew records play a marginal role—will not acquire the software to display catalog records in the vernacular. These libraries should, nevertheless, have the possibility of accessing these records in romanization.

Once the necessity for romanization was clear, the question arose: Which romanization scheme would best serve RLIN's purposes? In order to achieve standardization and to facilitate searching, the ideal solution would have been reversible romanization, where Hebrew letters are replaced, letter by letter, by Roman characters, and vowel points are ignored. Reversible romanization could also have eliminated the need to enter fields in duplicate, because, with the aid of a simple software program, the computer can reverse the Hebrew characters of a record into Roman characters, and vice versa. This plan was, however, rejected by RLG, again for understandable reasons. The RLIN database is already filled with thousands of Hebrew records which were input in the American Library Association/Library of Congress (ALA/LC) romanization scheme. Entering new records in reversible romanization would prevent clustering (linking records for the same work), and clustering is one of the main pillars of shared cataloging. So the viable alternative for RLIN was to use ALA/LC romanization.

The ALA/LC romanization scheme for Hebrew has its difficulties, because it attempts to transcribe one language into another, the grammar and script of which are built upon totally different principles. My fear is that the difficulties and ambiguities in the ALA/LC romanization system will result in the non-clustering of quite a number of records in the RLIN database, especially because the main goal in Hebraica cataloging,

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for many libraries, is to create records in the vernacular, and the romanized parallel fields are only an added burden. Budgetary restraints won't allow catalogers to spend much time on this added requirement, which will lead to sloppy romanization and non-clustering. I hope the future will prove me wrong.

The main difficulty in Hebrew romanization arises from the fact that Hebrew words consist of consonantal roots, to which different vowel points are added, depending on the conjugation of a verb or the declension of a noun. Most Hebrew publications for adults come without vowel points, and the reader—in our case the Hebrew cataloger—has to provide them in order to convert them into Roman vowel-letters.

The *correct* application of Hebrew vowel points is a direct result of the cataloger's thorough knowledge of Hebrew grammar and vast experience in the spoken language. This high level of knowledge and experience is clearly not required to create perfect Hebrew cataloging records in the vernacular. The people at the Library of Congress understand this, and they know that many Hebrew catalogers are not equipped with the proper credentials to romanize without error.

Paul Maher's booklet provides us with good romanization guidelines and with a list of useful reference tools for the romanization of Hebrew and Yiddish. To have these reference aids at the cataloger's side is no doubt very helpful. For reasons of efficiency, however, the cataloger will be told to use them only when the need arises. But, will the cataloger know when he or she doesn't know the correct application of vowel points? Many of us innocently assume that we know how to pronounce Hebrew words. All too often, catalogers are astounded to find out that they have made a romanization mistake, and don't understand why.

One example of this is the biblical name Daniel, romanized by LC as *Daniyel*. I had catalogers come to me after looking at this romanization and ask: "What's going on here?" I was able to answer them because I had the same reaction a few years ago, when I looked at an LC Hebraica catalog card that featured the name *Daniyel*. Before I corrected what seemed to me an obvious mistake on LC's part (why, after all, should *Daniyel* be different from *Mikha'el* and *Refa'el*?), I looked the name up in the Book of Daniel, and was surprised to see that the *tsere* was not under the *alef*, but under the *yod*.

There is not much the Library of Congress or any cataloging rule book can do to alleviate

this problem. Short of hiring professors of linguistics and Hebrew grammar to catalog our books, these difficulties will remain. Realizing that they exist and working with the right dictionaries will help to a degree.

One suggestion to Paul Maher is to take the example of *Daniyel* out of the chapter in which the *alef* is discussed (p. 12), because the problem inherent to the name *Daniyel* is left unexplained there, and the reader does not understand why it was chosen as an example. The romanization of *Daniyel* is discussed again on p. 19, under "Hebrew personal names," and there it makes sense.

Maher realized that in order for all Hebraica catalogers to achieve uniformity in romanization, they not only have to use the same reference works, but also the same editions, if different editions do not provide the same information. For some reference works, Maher tells us: "Any edition may be of occasional use," or: "Virtually any of the numerous editions is helpful" (p. 63). On the other hand, we are specifically instructed not to use abridged or early editions of

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Even-Shoshan's dictionary, but rather later, unabridged editions, because of significant differences in vocalization among the various editions (p. 62).

In the case of Alcalay's dictionary, Maher cites the *Milon 'Ivri-Angli shalem*, 1964 edition (p. 62). Perhaps the Library of Congress does not own Alcalay's later work, *Milon 'Ivri shalem*, 1969 edition (Alcalay, 1969), and Maher was therefore unaware of its existence. The problem is that, just as in Even-Shoshan's case, there are differences between Alcalay's two editions.

Alcalay's work is suggested as an aid in determining whether a *sheva* is *na'* or *nah*. A *sheva na'* is transcribed by Alcalay, while a *sheva nah* is not. (Standard Hebrew vocalization does not distinguish between them.) When romanizing foreign loan words with initial consonantal clusters, one is told to check whether Alcalay transcribes the initial *sheva* or not. In Alcalay's 1964 edition of *Milon 'Ivri-Angli shalem* (Alcalay, 1964), the Hebrew word for 'drama' has the *sheva* under the *dalet*, and Maher therefore brings the romanization *deramah* as an

example (p. 19). In Alcalay's 1969 edition of *Milon 'Ivri shalem* (Alcalay, 1969), however, the *sheva* under the *dalet* is omitted, and the word would accordingly be romanized as *dramah*.

Alcalay's two publications are not two editions of the same work; rather, the earlier dictionary is bilingual, the later one, monolingual. I assume that if Maher had been aware of the existence of the *Milon 'Ivri shalem*, he would have chosen it as a reference guide over the earlier, bilingual work. Maybe he will do so in a revised edition of his book. In the meantime, are we to use Alcalay's earlier work, because it is the one cited in Maher's list of reference aids? I would think so, for the sake of standardization. On the other hand, since, as Maher writes regarding Even-Shoshan's dictionary, "Later . . . editions take precedence" (p. 62), what are we to do if a new edition of Even-Shoshan's work—or of any other cited reference work—is published and differs from existing editions? We look forward to Maher's guidance regarding this problem.

A good database system lets the user search for key-words in any form they might appear, as long as the base-word is there. Truncation works very well for this purpose in Western European languages. In Hebrew, searching for the root of a word will do the trick, whether the record is in the vernacular or in reversible romanization. Records in the ALA/LC romanization scheme, however, lose this ability. There is an attempt on LC's part to salvage as much searchability as possible by using a hyphen to separate articles, conjugations, and prefixes from base-words. On p. 20 of Maher's book we read: "The 'base-word' is romanized *prior* to romanizing the prefix." For instance, although we say *bi-Rushalayim*, we romanize *bi-Yerushalayim*, and *Yerushalayim* becomes searchable even with prefixes.

The rule of romanizing base-words prior to romanizing prefixes applies to cases where the *sheva na'* at the beginning of a word changes to a *sheva nah* when certain prefixes (be-, ke-, le-) are added, and, as a result, the pronunciation of the first letter of the base-word changes. The application of this rule by LC is not consistent, however, because, when the first letter is one of the six "begeg kefet" (*bet, gimel, dalet, kaf, pe, tav*), the letter also loses its *dagesh kal* when prefixed. The loss of a *dagesh kal* also occurs after the particle "u." Were we to apply the rule of romanizing base-words prior to romanizing prefixes or articles, we would have to romanize *li-pene* rather than *li-fene*, or *u-banim* rather than *u-vanim*. It is clear why the rule does not go all the way; it

would lead too far away from the correct pronunciation of the word, and, since base-word searching in ALA/LC romanization is very problematic anyway, little would be gained and a lot lost. Again, LC should clarify the matter in a revised edition of Maher's book.

### Library of Congress Rule Interpretations

The chapter entitled "Notes on Library of Congress Rule Interpretations" is easier to digest than the preceding one, "Current Application of the ALA/LC Romanization Tables." Let me just touch upon two issues from the LCRI chapter.

The first one regards rule number 1.4F in AACR2: "Date of publication, distribution, etc." One of the examples Maher brings is of a book that has the Hebrew publication date 743—which can equal 1982 or 1983—and a Gregorian printing date 1983. According to Maher, the date on the bibliographic record should read 743 [1983], which suggests that the book could not have been published before it was printed. This assumption is surprising. I have come across books which had a Gregorian publication date on the title page, and a later Gregorian first printing date on the verso.

The second LCRI I had difficulty with relates to rule number 25.5C: "Additions to uniform titles," and number 25.6: "Parts of a work." My point may be illustrated with the examples

brought in the booklet, of two authors who wrote novellae on different tractates of the Talmud—one book per tractate—with all the books having the same title proper. The first author is Zundel Krozer; his work is called *Or ha-ḥamah*. The second author is Yom Tob ben Abraham Ishbili, the Riṭba, and his work is called *Ḥidushe ha-Riṭba*. Each book of both authors is cataloged separately. The Library of Congress treats Krozer's work as separately published items which do not constitute parts of a larger work; therefore, the uniform title of each book consists of the title of the whole work, with the name of the tractate added in parentheses and *not* separately subfielded in MARC (Machine Readable Cataloging) coding: *Or ha-ḥamah (Bava kama)*. On the other hand, Ishbili's work is seen as one work with many parts, which bear dependent designations, and therefore, the designation—in our case the name of the tractate—becomes a tagged subheading of the title of the whole work: *Ḥidushe ha-Riṭba. †p Ḥulin*.

The only clue we get from LC as to the reasoning behind treating the two authors differently, lies in the following sentence: "Whether rule 25.5C or rule 25.6 is applicable may depend on several factors, including the edition history" (p. 50). Granted, the Riṭba has ceased to write, while Zundel Krozer is still productive. Is that sufficient reason to view the *Ḥidushe ha-Riṭba* as one large work, and *Or ha-ḥamah* as individual entities? It is ironic that Maher ends the discussion of this matter with the sentence:

"This provision [25.6A2, *Ḥidushe ha-Riṭba*] should not be confused with that of 25.5C above [*Or ha-ḥamah*]" (p. 51). I find it indeed rather confusing and in need of clarification.

### Conclusions

*Hebraica Cataloging* is an impressive work, which required a lot of thought and diligent effort on the part of the author. It has very few errors, the most striking one being the expressions *ketav ḥaser* and *ketav male* (instead of *ketiv ḥaser* and *ketiv male*).

The book is not, and it was never meant to be, a lazy weekend's lounge-chair reading. It is demanding, and requires undivided attention and full concentration. But that is nothing new to catalogers. We have labored through AACR and AACR2, through classification schedules and subject heading guides, and we shall labor through *Hebraica Cataloging*. It's hard, but it's fun, and any real cataloger at heart will find it a challenging intellectual experience. Thank you, Paul Maher, and, when may we expect a sister publication which will guide us in cataloging records in Ladino, Judeo-Arabic and Judeo-Persian?

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