

DEWEINEAZAR

Elazar, David H.; Elazar, Daniel J. *A Classification System for Libraries of Judaica*. Second Edition. Reprint. Lanham, MD: University Press of America and The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs/Center for Jewish Community Studies, 1988.

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History

The Elazars first drafted their classification system in 1952 for the United Hebrew Schools Library in Detroit, Michigan. The United Hebrew Schools Library serves elementary, high school, and college students; teachers on all levels; and the community at large. For sixteen years, the system was tested, modified, and revised to satisfy the requirements of its users in a variety of settings, with a broad range of materials and patrons of varying levels of knowledge. In 1962, a mimeographed draft version was circulated (among librarians) for further comment and criticism. The first hard-cover edition was published in 1968 by Wayne State University Libraries.

Use of the system spread to libraries of synagogues and community centers, Hebrew and Day schools, university campuses, and research institutes in the United States and abroad. Ten years elapsed before the second edition was published in 1979 by the Center for Jewish Community Studies in Jerusalem, Israel. During those intervening years, the Elazars solicited and received comments from librarians using the system, especially Adaire Klein and Barbara Leff, and other members of the Association of Jewish Libraries of Southern California.

In 1986, Rita Berman Frischer, who uses the system in the Blumenthal Library of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, established the first Central Cataloging Service for Judaica libraries that use the Elazar (or Weine) classification system. Frischer has published a list of sixty-eight "Additions and Variations to the Elazar Classification System" (Frischer, 1988, p. 74–75), which is discussed further below.

Description of the Elazar System

Unlike other Judaica classifications without a strong philosophical basis, the Elazar system is organized according to the

development of the Jewish People. Beginning with the Bible, it evolves to Classical Judaica, Jewish Observance and Practice, Jewish Education, Languages, Literature, Community and Arts, History, Geography and Biography. Elazar then enumerates 99 numbers for Israel (too many for most small libraries, except for those specializing in this area), and 99 for General Works.

The scheme serves only the Judaica library, allowing for simple and cohesive classification of the broad range of Judaica and Jewish-content materials. As it uses all the numbers from 001–999 for Judaica (with the exception of a few general reference books), gaps in numbers and the clustering of books in the 200s—which are prevalent in other Dewey-variation schemes—are eliminated. Judaica and Jewish-interest titles do not have to be identified by numbers taken from a table, signifying a location (Israel) or class of persons (Jews) or language (Hebrew), as must be done when using the Dewey Decimal Classification scheme. Elazar has an Index, but no subject-heading list. Library of Congress subject headings are frequently used with it, but may be unnecessary in the small Judaica library because of the scheme's specificity.

The Elazar system is particularly well-suited to Federation libraries that are concerned with demographics, refugee movements, and the history, work, and personalities of Jewish organizational life. Whole numbers are provided for many types of organizations: political, health and welfare, service, educational, youth, cultural, social, and international. It is excellent for Federation-supported Teacher-Resource Center Libraries as well, with the numbers 300–389 provided for Jewish Education.

The New Printing of the Second Edition

Copies of the second edition are in scarce supply, so the appearance of a new printing of the scheme with Addenda is most welcome. The second edition has been reprinted, not revised; this reprint contains added, not integrated, material. "Addenda to the Classification System—September 1987" are found from p. 154 to the top of p. 156 of the book, and include both corrections (nine) and additions (thirty). The conflict in geographic and topical subdivisions of the Holocaust pointed out by Bella Weinberg (1983, p. 27) remains uncorrected. The "Addenda to the Index" from p. 213–214 has thirteen corrections and nineteen additions, but is still missing the entry "Holocaust," which was pointed out by Weinberg in *Judaica Librarianship* (1983, p. 28).

Conclusions

On the whole, librarians who use the system find that it meets their needs. The Elazars have been hospitable to suggestions, and even to expansions based upon their work. They cite the expansion of "736—World War II and the Nazi Holocaust" that appeared in *Judaica Librarianship* (Posner, 1985, p. 50). An expansion of Elazar's "619 Women's Position and Treatment" appears in *Organizing a Jewish Women's Library* (JWB Jewish Book Council, 1988) but has not as yet been examined by the Elazars. Rita Berman Frischer's list of additions to the scheme dated February 1987, which was published in *Judaica Librarianship* Vol. 4, No. 1 (Frischer, 1988, p. 74–75), is also not taken into account in the work under review.

It would be interesting to compare Frischer's extensive additions with the Elazars' and to learn their rationale for not accepting them. Perhaps they will find the time to go into some detail regarding this on the pages of *Judaica Librarianship*. Indeed,

JL might serve as the "clearing house" for Elazar changes and variations, as it does for Library of Congress subject headings.

The Elazars are deeply involved in Jewish and Israeli life, and are thus sensitive to, and aware of, events and issues that are likely to be recorded and debated in written and non-print material. They should continuously monitor their classification scheme to determine which new issues, trends, and events require the creation of new class numbers. This is especially important in Elazar, as no authoritative subject heading list is associated with it, and specificity is its major advantage.

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- Marcia Weiss Posner is Librarian of the Reiss-Wiener Library of UJA-Federation of NY, where she uses the Elazar system. She has also established the Suffolk Association of Jewish Schools Teacher's Resource Center and Mobile Lending Library, using Elazar. Dr. Posner serves as President of the Association of Jewish Libraries.*

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cuttering that seems to lack any discernible system. Some documents, e.g., the *Copper scroll*, are apparently cuttered by their English title at .C6; others are cuttered by their Hebrew title, e.g., *Hodayot* (Thanksgiving Psalms) at .H6. *Sefer Berit Damesek* is at .D3 (evidently for "Damesek" which is not the first word of the title), and the Temple scroll is at .M5, which is probably based on the Hebrew word for Temple—[*bet ha-*] *mikdash*, or possibly *mishkan*. This "method," if it can be called that, carries the scattering effect of cuttering by title to its extremes, and should not be emulated by any library that wishes to serve its readers by a coherent and intelligible shelf arrangement.

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NOTE

A recently published article supports many of the statements in this paper:

Heisey, Terry, M. "Paradigm Agreement and Literature Obsolescence: A comparative study in the Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls" *Journal of Documentation* Vol. 44 No. 4 (Dec. 1988), pp. 285-301.

Hebrew Bibliographic Data

1. איגוד הבינלאומי לתיעוד. מיון עשרוני אוניברסלי. מהד' עברית מקוצרת. תל-אביב: המועצה הלאומית למחקר ולפיתוח, המרכז למידע טכנולוגי ומדעי, תש"ל.
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