

Research Services

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In the last twenty-five years Jewish studies in this country, in Israel, and elsewhere have experienced tremendous growth, and Judaica librarianship, in its own manner, has tried to keep up with the giant strides of the discipline it serves.

Obviously, it is impossible to enumerate all the achievements of the last quarter of a century here, therefore, my mention of a few outstanding accomplishments in this field should be regarded as a highly selective sampling. The multivolume dictionary catalogs of the Jewish Division of New York Public Library (1960), of the Klau Library of Hebrew Union College (1964), and the Catalogue of Hebrew Books of Harvard University Library (1968) have put at the disposal of scholars and librarians the records of hundreds of thousands of Hebraica and Judaica publications. *The Index of Articles of Jewish Studies* (1969ff.) has become an indispensable reference tool. Shlomo Shunami's standard *Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies* (2nd edition enlarged, 1965) was enhanced in 1975 by a *Supplement* that includes over 2,000 entries (the 1965 volume has 4,751 entries). In other words, the *Supplement* that represents basically the bibliographical output of only ten years contains almost half of the total number of bibliographies published over a period of some 300 years, since the first Jewish bibliographies started to appear in the seventeenth century! The Hebrew Paleography Project (established in 1965) has published a number of volumes of pioneering importance for the study of medieval Hebrew manuscripts. The two volumes of Shimeon Brisman's *Jewish Research Literature* (1977, 1987) place in the hand of the interested and serious reader the best, most reliable and concise guide to the subject.

Not only the published bibliographies and reference works bear testimony to progress in Judaica librarianship. Sophisticated new technologies such as automation and microfilming, on site in Judaica libraries, the wide availability of library materials through these measures as well as through facsimiles and reprints, and the proliferation of special collections of Judaica throughout the world are all to be credited for making the present period the best of times for researchers in Jewish studies. If one considers Manhattan alone, from 4th Street to 185th Street one finds an unprecedented accumulation of Judaica

books in such fine libraries as that of Hebrew Union College, New York Public Library, Yivo, Leo Baeck Institute, Jewish Theological Seminary, and Yeshiva University.

Therefore, the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the Judaica Department of the Harvard College Library, an exemplary model for innovations and substantial contributions, provides us with an opportunity to rejoice in the remarkable development of the field. More significantly it allows the practitioners of Judaica librarianship to look forward and assess the *desiderata* for the future.

The difficulties a Judaica bibliographer faces in his or her tasks are succinctly formulated by Robert Singerman in the introduction to his *Jewish Serials of the World* (1986):

At first glance, it is somewhat surprising to note that there does not yet exist an authoritative, book-length study of the three-hundred-year-old history of Jewish serials and press since the founding of the *Gazeta de Amsterdam* in 1675. This lacuna, while regrettable, is certainly understandable when the linguistic diversity of the thousands of Jewish serials is recalled. Undoubtedly, a command of at least eight languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, Judezmo, German, French, English, Russian and Polish) would be required of the ideal historian of Jewish journalism. The expert would also need to be fully knowledgeable in Jewish culture and intellectual history with additional training in modern Jewish history, content analysis, and the historical development of journalism. Another major handicap, while not insurmountable, is the lack of a comprehensive, global checklist of all known Jewish serials with their publishing and editorial genealogies fully described and with the titles located in holding repositories.

Similar demands could be placed on bibliographers in Jewish studies in many other areas and the status of available resources is not always different from the situation that Singerman describes.

A quotation from another recently published book demonstrates the tentativeness in many other aspects of Jewish bibliography and booklore. Malachi Beit-Arie, in the foreword to his *Specimens of Medieval Hebrew Scripts* (1987), states, "We have not yet forged a clear methodology, morpholog-

ical or quantitative, for differentiation between models of the same type [of Hebrew script], and even our classification into types is tentative." In short, two challenges confront the Jewish bibliographer and scholar of Jewish booklore: the complexity of the field of Jewish studies, in general, and the frequent lack of authoritative reference books and handbooks that are commonly available in other disciplines. Accordingly, despite the significant achievements, many ambitious and innovative new projects in research services still await the attention and dedication of competent Judaica librarians.

In a broader sense, Judaica librarianship research services may be divided into two major categories: direct services, such as bibliographies, indexes, catalogs, guides and reference works; and indirect services, of a more abstract scholarly nature, that encompass works dealing with the history of the Hebrew manuscript and printed book, the history of publishing, Jewish book collections, etc. Obviously, in some ways the two areas overlap.

The following are examples of a few projects that seem worthy of being continued and completed or planned and carried out.

The National Hebrew Bibliography Project began in 1964 at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem. This most ambitious, first national Hebrew bibliography is now nearing completion of its editorial stage. The international Jewish library community is eagerly awaiting the publication, in one form or another, of this monumental work and should be ready to offer any help needed to promote its speedy completion and distribution.

A systematic and sustained effort should be applied to the consistent, periodic updating of standard Jewish bibliographies and reference works. Some important examples are: Shunami's *Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies*, the last edition of which is from 1975, M.M. Kasher and J.B. Mandelbaum's *Sarei ha-efef* (a millennium of Hebrew authors [500-1500 C.E.]; a complete bibliographical compendium of Hebraica. . . , new edition, 1978); Abraham Yaari, *Bibliography of the Passover Haggadah*, 1960, for which a number of supplements have been compiled by various bibliographers, but which has not been issued in a new,

cumulative, revised edition; and Nahum Rakover's *Otsar ha-mishpat* (a bibliography on Jewish law), published in 1975.

There are also *desiderata* in the field of periodical indexing. All users appreciate the comprehensiveness and the detailed and easy classification of the *Index of Articles on Jewish Studies*, but the fact that there are now twenty-seven volumes of this important work makes cumulative indexes, arranged by author and subject and published at regular intervals, desirable. Passage indexes to classical Jewish literature in periodicals, going back to the emergence of modern Jewish scholarship, are also important. The Saul Lieberman Talmudic Research Institute of the Jewish Theological Seminary in Jerusalem is in the process of preparing such a passage index to Talmudic literature, and it is to be hoped both that the work will be completed soon and that other similar projects will be planned and carried out.

Annotated critical bibliographies on well-defined subjects or influential authors would also fill gaps. Louis Feldman's masterly bibliography on Josephus (1986) could serve as a model, and one hopes that Jacob Dienstag's labors in the field of Maimonides bibliography will ultimately be published in a suitable form.

The field of Jewish studies needs an up-to-date, accurate, comprehensive bibliographical encyclopedia. The most comprehensive one available is in German, is not always accurate, and is hopelessly outdated (S. Wininger's *Grosse juedische National-biographie, 1925-1936*). As Shimeon Brisman writes:

The number of Jewish biographical encyclopedias and lexicons, arranged in alphabetical order, is substantial. Unfortunately, some are incomplete, defective, or unreliable. This situation prompted some scholars, beginning in the early 19th century, to propose the production of a national Jewish biography. Several attempts to produce such a work were made, none too successful. A national Jewish biography is still a dream of the future. (*Jewish Research Literature*, vol. 2, pp. 253-254)

Obviously, such a project could be carried out only as a cooperative venture and over a long period of time.

A large number of publications in the post-Holocaust period have dealt with the history of Jewish communities in various geographical locations. Though good bibliographies are available on the history of the Jews in many countries, there are still some areas where reliable, accurate, comprehensive works would be helpful. Just as one example, the history of the Jews in

Hungary is not bibliographically well documented, and a "Hungaria Judaica," modeled after the excellent *Germania Judaica* (1917-1968), would be an important contribution. The same applies to individual, important Jewish communities of the past and the present.

The standard and still extremely useful encyclopedia of beginning lines of Medieval Hebrew poetry (*Otsar ha-shirah ve-ha-piyut*), the work of Israel Davidson (published in 1924-1938), has never been updated.

Accordingly, in all areas of bibliographies and reference works in Jewish studies one could suggest projects to complement the many fine tools already at our disposal or to bring such tools to fields that lack them.

Bibliographical work and thoughtful indexing could also facilitate the work of students through study guides and bibliographies to such monumental achievements of scholars of the previous generation as Saul Lieberman's *Tosefta ki-feshutah* or M.M. Kasher's *Torah shelemah*. These works embody an immense number of references to Rabbinic and other literature, and their use is quite complicated for those who are not well versed in this type of literature.

Similarly, there are great gaps in the field of cataloging important collections of Hebrew manuscripts and rare books. The collections of Hebrew manuscripts in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, and the Jewish National and University Library are not described in printed catalogs, while great and famous collections of Hebrew manuscripts in the old European libraries are frequently known only through nineteenth- and eighteenth-century catalogs (e.g., Florence, Parma, and such German libraries as Hamburg and Munich, which had their collections of Hebrew manuscripts cataloged by the great Moritz Steinschneider). Hebrew manuscripts could be cataloged not only according to the depository where they are kept but also by country of origin. In this manner, manuscript collections stemming from a particular culture and tradition can be brought together. Examples of this kind of catalog are Amnon Netzer's *Manuscripts of the Jews of Persia in the Ben Zvi Institute* (1985) and Norman Golb's *Spartan College of Judaica Yemenite Manuscripts* (1972). The foundation for the preparation of catalogs of Hebrew manuscripts is already in place through the efforts of The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts of the Jewish National and University Library, the Hebrew Paleography Project, and the Index of Jewish Art: Iconographical Index of Hebrew Illuminated Manuscripts, the latter two joint Israeli-French projects. These

projects, when completed, will undoubtedly make the task of anyone setting out to catalog individual, public, or private collections of Hebrew manuscripts much easier.

It would also be desirable to publish catalogs of the rare printed Hebraica holdings of major Judaica libraries (similar to the fine catalog of the Mehlman Collection [*Ginzei Yisrael*], in the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, prepared by Isaac Yudlov, 1984). Furthermore, good, reliable guides to individual collections should be made available so that a researcher can know what kind of materials to expect in each library.

On a more general level, Hebrew manuscripts and printed books deserve scholarly exploration in their own right. Studies in paleography, in scribal traditions and practices, in the selection of works to be copied, the dissemination of manuscripts, the textual traditions they reflect, the esthetic aspect of the handwritten book and its survival — or unfortunately, frequently, its destruction — are all challenging fields for investigation. The first and last general introduction to all aspects of the lore of Hebrew manuscripts is still Moritz Steinschneider's *Vorlesungen ueber die Kunde hebraeischer Handschriften* (1897, Hebrew translation, with additions by A.M. Haberman in 1965). Undoubtedly, in view of the great advances and changes in the field, a new handbook providing information on Hebrew manuscripts is needed.

The history of the Hebrew printed book also offers many research opportunities. Histories and records of local printing presses, publishing, booktrade, illustration, censorship, technical and esthetic aspects of typography, copyright and Rabbinic approbation, Christian-Jewish relationships in the scholarly and commercial aspects of Hebrew publishing and printing, and the impact of the introduction of printing of Hebrew books on the various Jewish communities and on the Jewish mind are subjects that should invite the curiosity of the researcher.

In our times, when interest in the Jewish book is so keen, careful thought should be given to planning, coordinating, and executing worthy projects in the field of Judaica bibliography and booklore. In addition to supporting the few single-minded, highly dedicated individuals who devote themselves to research in this area, we must make provisions for directing promising young scholars toward Judaica bibliography and booklore as worthy, stimulating, and challenging scholarly endeavors. In the words of Shimeon Brisman:

During his years as a Jewish Studies librarian and lecturer in Hebrew bibliography, the author has noticed with disappointment that the average Jewish scholar, student, or even librarian is totally unaware of the existence of such [reference] tools; but he has been pleasantly surprised as a lecturer to notice students' fascination with Jewish bibliography, a subject usually considered "dry." It seems that Jewish bibliography when presented

in the realm of Jewish cultural and literary history, can become an exciting topic for scholars and students. (*Jewish Research Literature*, vol. 1, p. IX)

The time may have come for considering the establishment of an Institute for Judaica Bibliography and Booklore that would serve as an international clearinghouse for the field and eventually grow into a center for the training of scholars and for the realiza-

tion of some of the projects that would benefit Jewish studies the world over. The great progress achieved in the last quarter of a century, so dramatically symbolized in this country by the magnificent contributions of the Judaica Department of the Harvard College Library to the field of Judaica librarianship, should serve as an inspiration to the entire profession when it looks to the future.