

Introduction

The present issue of *Judaica Librarianship* marks the completion of the first twenty-five years in the life of the Association of Jewish Libraries. We have reached a point where we pause, take stock, remember our modest beginnings, assess our accomplishments and congratulate ourselves on them, and plan for the future. The Association came into being just as two momentous changes affecting Judaica librarianship were beginning to take place. The one was tremendous growth in both the quantity and the quality of Jewish publishing; the other—amazing developments in technology, touching upon most phases of our lives and not least upon our libraries. The Association of Jewish Libraries has given us the framework and a good measure of the support needed to meet the professional challenges that have faced us all, whether we felt ready for them or not. For our Association is, more than anything else, the place where we come together to teach one another and to learn from one another. An AJL convention is a learning experience, above all.

In reading some of the reminiscences, I thought of the misgivings on both sides that accompanied the merger of two library organizations—one representing synagogue, school, and center libraries (The Jewish Library Association); the other, research and special libraries (The Jewish Librarians Association). I hope and believe that these misgivings have long been dissipated in the wake of the real concerns that bind us together. And in saying that we teach one another and learn from one another, I do not wish to foster the notion that there are those whose job it is only to teach, and others who stand only to learn. We all have things to teach one another, and we all need to learn. Before us, then, is a story of Judaica librarians creating a forum in which to grow professionally by helping one another.

This collection comprises three sections. The first section consists of a chronicle of AJL's history. Second are articles on various aspects of the Association's development and endeavors. The third section is a directory of members who have responded to a questionnaire on their activity in AJL and related professional work.

Section one, separated from the rest because of its length, is Marcia Posner's chronicle of AJL's first twenty-five years. While particular aspects of library activity are stressed in most of the articles in the following section, here the Association it-

self, in the ups and downs of its existence from year to year, forms the theme.

Maxwell Whiteman begins the second section by describing the American-Jewish cultural milieu and the changes that occurred, particularly in attitudes to collecting and preserving Jewish books and archives, after the destruction of the great European Jewish cultural centers. He establishes the context, as it were, into which the Association of Jewish Libraries emerged. Jacob Dienstag, Miriam Leikind, and Mae Weine—their names are listed in alphabetical order—are senior colleagues who were active in the organizations that preceded AJL and in AJL itself. Mr. Dienstag's career was in a research library, while Ms. Leikind and Ms. Weine are distinguished synagogue librarians. The two articles that follow emphasize the experience of the synagogue, school, and center (SSC) library. Hazel Karp examines that type of library in its relationship to the public library, while Rita Frischer discusses AJL's involvement with the classification of Judaica and the Association's role as a forum and a resource in this area. Robert Singerman traces developments in research collections in Jewish studies over the years of AJL's existence, speaking of such influences as the Library of Congress PL-480 program for Israel and the growth of Jewish studies at universities. Bella Weinberg surveys developments in automation as they have affected Judaica libraries over the same quarter century. Such developments are of great moment. They have affected us all in many ways and, in particular, have made it possible for

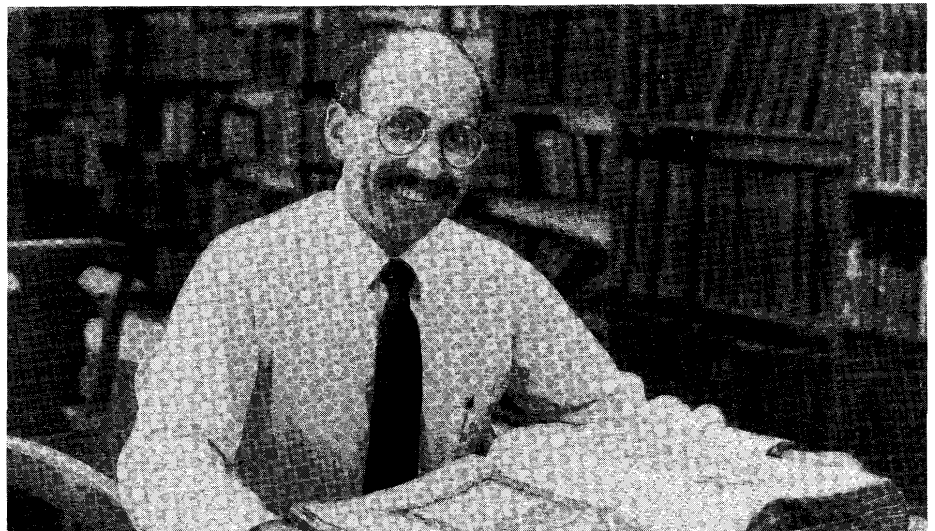
Judaica research libraries to be linked by an online bibliographic facility. This possibility is now a reality. The section concludes with Herbert Zafren sharing with us his observations on the state of our art.

The concluding section is our professional Who's Who. It sets forth a record of the people who made the Association work and who drew upon its riches.

We are, all of us, writers and readers, officers and constituency, the Association of Jewish Libraries. I remember wondering in 1972, as I became President of the Research and Special Libraries Division, and again in 1974, as I took office as President of AJL, who would follow in our footsteps. I need not have wondered. There is today a new generation of active, sophisticated Judaica librarians. The field deserves nothing less. We are, all of us, the AJL, and I believe we have made of our Association something worthwhile. *Mazal tov* to us all, then, and may we enter the next phase with vision and strength.

I wish to thank all of the authors, and also Marcia Posner and Bella Weinberg, both as authors and as partners in the editorial process—their boundless enthusiasm and energy are an inspiration—and Zachary Baker, who did the copy editing. His patience is infinite. It is matched only by his industry.

Aryeh, a.k.a., Leonard Gold



Leonard S. Gold, AJL President, 1974–76.

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