

***Judaica Americana: A Bibliography of Publications to 1900*, compiled by Robert Singerman; foreword by Jonathan D. Sarna. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990. 2 vols. (xxxiv, 1335 p.) (Bibliographies and Indexes in American History; no. 14.) Index.**

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### Description

*Judaica Americana* is an "enumerative" rather than "analytical" bibliography. In other words, its compiler was less interested in "physical characteristics such as paper or binding or textual variants and the ordering of printing states" (p. xxiii), and concentrated instead on providing "a sense, not a census" of a field. In Singerman's words,

The work presented here attempts to bring under bibliographic control a significant body of printed monographic and serial literature pertaining to Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture published in the United States, in any language, through 1900. The monographs recorded here need not relate to the American Jewish experience to warrant inclusion in this resource. Similarly, it will be readily apparent that a high percentage of the titles are authored by non-Jews, many of whom are not even Americans. (p. [xxi])

*Judaica Americana* also fits into the categories of national bibliography (Americana) and subject bibliography (Judaica). Comprehensive bibliographies of Americana – books and serials printed within the territory of the present-day United States (to take one possible definition of the field) – do not yet extend past the mid-1830s in their coverage. Large-scale bibliographies for later decades do exist for certain genres, such as Lyle Henry Wright's three bibliographies of American fiction, covering the years 1774-1900 (1965, 1966, 1969). Singerman has made use of all available printed bibliographies of Americana; he has also been the beneficiary of several previous attempts to

compile comprehensive lists of American Judaica imprints, although the bibliography that he has produced differs in coverage from its predecessors.

### Relation to Rosenbach

The first major bibliography in this field, A.S.W. Rosenbach's *An American Jewish Bibliography* (1926), is the point of departure for Singerman, and it is worth taking a close look at Rosenbach in order to understand the ways in which two different generations of Judaica bibliographers have viewed their assigned tasks. Rosenbach subtitles his work, "a list of books and pamphlets by Jews or relating to them, printed in the United States from the establishment of the press in the colonies until 1850." The first of the 689 entries in Rosenbach's bibliography is for the very first book printed in the English colonies, the *Bay Psalm Book* (Cambridge, MA, 1640), which, in addition to being the earliest North American imprint, includes the first samples of Hebrew typography in an American book.

Rosenbach's inclusion of the *Bay Psalm Book* reflects his interest in "the knowledge of Hebrew and the Bible by the earliest divines of New England" – an interest that is also reflected by his inclusion of Hebrew grammars authored by Jews and Gentiles alike. "The story of the first Hebrew Grammar, the first Jewish Prayer Book, the first Hebrew Bible, the first Jewish Almanac, the first American editions of Josephus, the earliest Jewish newspapers, can be traced by a study of the titles contained in this bibliography." Other themes that appear in Rosenbach are:

... the fascinating story of Jewish religious life in the United States in

the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century; the interest in the opening of the Ohio and Illinois country, and the participating of the Jews therein; the beginning of the Synagogues, the first Jewish Sunday Schools, the first charitable organizations, the land speculations, the genesis of the Reform Movement, the missionaries and the well-known converts, the early Jewish dramatists and authors, the Controversial writers, believers in the theory of the Jewish origin of the American Indians, the massacres in the East, and descriptions of Palestine, and expeditions to the River Jordan; the constitutions and by-laws of early congregations and educational societies . . .

(Rosenbach, 1926, pp. x-xi)

A number of these categories are, as we shall see, excluded from Singerman's bibliography, as is Rosenbach's "attempt . . . to give the first use of Hebrew type in each locality" (Rosenbach, 1926, pp. x-xi).

The criteria set forth by Rosenbach for a work's inclusion bear what by today's standards might be regarded as a faintly apologetic tone, especially with regard to his evident desire to underline the affinities of colonial New England thinkers with the Hebrew Bible and ancient Judaism. An occasional line of Hebrew text or a passing reference to Jews (ancient or modern) in a book authored by a Gentile often suffices for Rosenbach to include a full citation in his bibliography. American imprints of fictional works by American and foreign Jewish authors (or Christian authors who, like Benjamin Disraeli, were born Jewish) also appear here, as do books

printed abroad that were by American Jews writing on Jewish subjects. In these respects, too, Singerman differs from Rosenbach.

Rosenbach was well aware that his book laid the groundwork for future bibliographies of American Judaica, and in his preface he lamented the fact that he was not able to extend its coverage past "the year 1850 when the Far West was beckoning to the East, when California was opening its golden doors, and when the rumors of Secession were just beginning" (Rosenbach, 1926, p. xiii).

Curiously – and in tune, perhaps with his emphasis on *Americana* – Rosenbach does not refer here to the two signal events that set the second half of the nineteenth century apart from the two preceding centuries for American Jews: the mass immigration of Central European Jews after the suppression of the revolutions of 1848, and the even larger scale immigration of Jews from Russia, Galicia, Hungary, and Romania that commenced after the Civil War and picked up momentum in the wake of the Russian pogroms and the restrictive May Laws of 1881 and 1882.

These are the events that, from today's perspective, arguably make "the second half of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century . . . perhaps a more interesting subject for our readers" (Rosenbach, 1926, p. xiii) than the pre-1850 period, and not, say, the opening of the West or the threat of secession – as intrinsically important as these latter events indeed were, for American society as a whole and for American Jews in particular. Between 1850 and 1900, after all, the number of Jews residing in the United States increased from a few scores of thousands to well over a million, turning the American Jewish community from a peripheral backwater into one of the world's most dynamic and important centers of Jewish life.

### Supplements to Rosenbach

Six decades were to elapse before Robert Singerman would attempt to update Rosenbach, and carry his coverage forward to 1900. During this period, five supplementary lists to Rosenbach were compiled, none of which, however, "attempt[ed] to identify all of the libraries where a given work might be found, and

none thought to create a cumulative listing of publications" (Singerman, 1990, p. [xvii]). Indeed, four of these five supplements restricted their coverage to the holdings either of the Klau Library at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, in Cincinnati (Marcus, 1954; Levine, 1959), or the American Jewish Historical Society, in Waltham, Massachusetts (Kaganoff, 1971; Friedmann, 1973). Of these four supplements, two extend Rosenbach's chronological scope by covering the period from 1851 to 1875 (Levine, 1959; Friedmann, 1973).

Edwin Wolf 2nd, who compiled the fifth of the supplements, criticized the "inadequacies" of both Rosenbach's bibliography and its earliest supplement, by Jacob Rader Marcus:

Both Rosenbach and Marcus devoted much space to books of only peripheral Jewish importance, such as Christian theological works on Old Testament themes, to poems and essays with a biblical, but no essentially Jewish, context, and to comprehensive religious histories where the Jewish interest is limited to biblical history as a prelude to Christianity. They have listed at length successive editions of the often-reprinted Josephus and *Merchant of Venice*. On the other hand, they did not record many items which are of more significance and usefulness to researchers, particularly political, scientific, and commercial works by American Jews. (Wolf, 1958, pp. 187-188)

Wolf's call for "a full-scale 'second edition'" was eventually heeded by Singerman, who has paid close attention to the former's criticisms of Rosenbach's inclusion of Christian theological treatises and multiple editions of Josephus and Shakespeare. At the same time, Singerman sensibly steers clear of Wolf's implicit recommendation that works by American Jews on political, scientific, and commercial topics be included in the "second edition."

### Definition of Scope

In every subject bibliography – even the most seemingly straightforward one – the question of scope unavoidably arises. One must define one's terms. In the

case of *Judaica Americana*, the fundamental question is, What is meant by this phrase? On the one hand, while "Americana" seems clear enough, use of the term does manage to raise questions: Are works by American authors, printed outside of the United States, to be considered Americana? How about works by authors who only later settled in the United States (i.e., books that were written or printed before an author immigrated)? As for "Judaica" (or "Jewish"), we have already had a glimpse of the problems associated with this term, as employed by Rosenbach and Wolf.

The thorny question of what constitutes "Judaica Americana" is answered by Singerman both positively and negatively. On the positive side:

The basic premise has been to include all separately printed works issued under Jewish auspices, as well as all works relating to the Jewish people and the culture, from antiquity to modern times. *Judaic subject matter, and not the author's ancestry, is the determining factor in judging the appropriateness of a work for inclusion.* (Singerman, 1990, pp. xxvii-xxviii; author's emphasis)

In addition, all works printed in the United States in the Hebrew alphabet – regardless of subject matter – are included in Singerman's bibliography. On the negative side, Singerman lists twenty broad categories of literature that are *not* included in his work. Examples include:

1. Works written by Jews but with no Jewish content . . . .
2. Creative writing, music, and any other material authored, composed, edited, translated, or illustrated by a Jew or a converted Jew but lacking Jewish content or themes . . . .
3. Books . . . containing casual references to Jews . . . and Jewish culture or Judaism that, in the compiler's professional judgment, make no contribution to the scholarly understanding of Jewish life . . . and have little or no lasting importance in the history of ideas.
4. Works printed or published by Jews or Jewish publishing firms but without any Jewish content.
5. Grammars of Hebrew or

Aramaic or related philological treatises authored by non-Jews.

6. Holy Land/Palestine travel narratives.

7. Works printed in countries other than the United States . . . .

9. Successive editions or multiple printings of a work, e.g., repeated editions of Josephus, unless considerably enlarged or otherwise significant or supportive of the compiler's gazetteer of Jewish publishers . . . .

13. Well-known classics of world literature containing Jewish subject matter or themes, e.g., *Merchant of Venice*, *The Jew of Malta*, *Oliver Twist*, etc. . . . However, translations of these works into a Jewish language (Hebrew or Yiddish) may be included.

14. Works treating of the Bible, Biblical theology . . . etc., unless directly pertinent to Jewish history or Judaism before the Christian era. Biblical texts, commentaries on books of the Bible, and biographies of Biblical personages are similarly excluded, as the majority of such works are clearly intended for Christian use and the propagation of Christian doctrines.

15. Works on religion versus scientism, creationism versus evolution, Sabbath/Sunday controversy, Jesus, the rise of Christianity, the New Testament, Ancient Near East, or the Inquisition. . . .

19. Works without Jewish content but containing examples of Hebrew type or Jewish symbolism. . . .

(Singerman, 1990, pp. xxix-xxx)

These areas of exclusion have been quoted at length in order to shed light on the sheer difficulty involved in defining so seemingly straightforward a field as "Judaica Americana."

A late cousin of mine used to say that "every Jew has his own *Shulhan 'arukh*"; it is apparent that this maxim applies to the field of Judaica bibliography as well. Each bibliographer chooses his or her own criteria in delineating a chosen subject or genre. If the scope of *Judaica Americana* varies considerably from that of *An American Jewish Bibliography*, that reflects the different times in which the two works were compiled, along with their compilers' variant historical perspectives. Where Rosenbach was to a large degree concerned with the impact

of ancient Jewish traditions on American civilization – even (or especially) when they are conveyed by non-Jewish authors for expressly Christian purposes – Singerman emphasizes the Judaic content and provenance of the bulk of the works cited in his bibliography. Also, given his extension of chronological coverage to 1900, Singerman needed to find a way to set limits on the sheer quantity of items eligible for inclusion.

Even so, in *Judaica Americana* the reader is confronted with an imposing two-volume set, comprising 6,512 entries from the years 1676 to 1900. Books cited are listed in a separate section by language (alphabetically, under each year); serials are listed chronologically (and then alphabetically by title under each language). The 1,170 entries to the year 1850 represent a significant expansion of Rosenbach, notwithstanding the considerable restrictions that Singerman has placed on the subject scope of his compilation.

Nevertheless, as might be inferred from what we have said so far, not all of Rosenbach's 689 entries are reproduced in Singerman's bibliography. Indeed, Rosenbach's very first item, the *Bay Psalm Book*, does not appear in the later bibliography, since it is a "Biblical text. . . clearly intended for Christian use. . . ." (The first work cited in Singerman's bibliography is a sermon by William Hubbard, printed in Boston in 1676, *The Happiness of a People in the Wisdome of their Rulers Directing and in the Obedience of their Brethren attending under what Israel ought [!] to do.*)

A spot check of several books printed in 1845 revealed that five of six titles listed on pp. 398-399 of Rosenbach do not appear at all in Singerman (either because they lacked Judaic content, were not U.S. imprints, or were subsequent editions of works printed previously), and seven of ten titles listed on pp. 180-181 of Singerman are not represented in Rosenbach. (An additional three titles not listed in Rosenbach were picked up by Wolf.) Thus, as Singerman himself states, "Because of the compiler's narrower standards for inclusion . . . this work [should not] be considered a complete replacement for those of my esteemed predecessors" (p. xxviii).

Singerman "admit[s] that some of the material contained in this resource is

also of questionable relevance – at least in the light of current trends in scholarship" (p. xxxi). In some instances, he even appears to violate his own criterion whereby "books containing casual references to Jews" are excluded. (See, for example, item numbers 882, by Ezekiel Bacon, and 883, by Robert Baird, both from 1845. The first work, entitled *Vacant Hours: A Sequel to "Recreations of a Sick Room,"* contains references to Jews on pages [18]-19, in the poem "The Pilgrim's Home." According to Singerman, Jews are mentioned on pages 283 and 313 of the latter item, *Religion in America*.) Nevertheless, when all is said and done, *Judaica Americana* is a monumental achievement, truly staggering in its dimensions when one takes account of the fact that it is essentially the product of just one individual's years of toil.

### Methods of Compilation

A number of features underscore the compiler's methodical approach to the task at hand. Not only is he thoroughly at home with Rosenbach's bibliography and its successors, but as we have already indicated, he has checked standard bibliographies of Americana, by Evans (1903-34; 1955-59), Shipton (1969), Shaw (1958-63; 1965-66), Shoemaker (1964-71; 1972-73), and others. Wherever an entry for a work appears in any of these sources, a citation to them is given within Singerman's entry as well. Singerman also attempted to examine each item personally, which necessitated research tours to public and private collections throughout the United States. *Judaica Americana* also includes *National Union Catalog* library location symbols to facilitate access to the works cited. (A total of 23,000 location symbols are included for the 6,512 entries in the bibliography.) The OCLC and RLIN databases were also searched for library locations. Taken as a whole, this bibliography testifies to its compiler's patience and fortitude, and to his willingness to grasp a big topic by the horns.

### Serials

One extremely useful feature of *Judaica Americana* is the separate *Union List of Nineteenth-Century Jewish Serials Published in the United States*, which is found in volume two, after the chronological section for monographs (where

5,892 titles are listed). Citations and library locations (some of the latter, unfortunately, no longer valid, since not all copies can be found) for periodicals appear in this section, under their respective languages. The serials rank by language as follows: English, 408 titles; Yiddish, 141 titles; German, 53 titles; Hebrew, 27 titles; French, 1 title.

Surprisingly, no Russian serials are listed here, although it is known that a considerable number of educated Russian-speaking Jews arrived on these shores after 1881. Two possible candidates for inclusion among the serials, notwithstanding their vague titles, are:

(1) *Russkii listok* [Russian newspaper], no. 1-4; 1892. Edited by G. M. Prais, author of the book *Russkie evrei v Amerike. . . s 1881 g. po 1891 g.* [Russian Jews in America, from 1881 to 1891] (St. Petersburg, 1893).

(2) *Rusaskaia zhizn' v Amerike* [Russian life in America], no. 1-26; 1898-1899. New York. Edited by Boris Bogen (1869-1929), then a member of the faculty of the Hebrew Technical Institute (affiliated with the Educational Alliance), later a prominent Jewish social worker and community leader.

## Index

One other feature of *Judaica Americana* worth mentioning is its extensive index, over 300 pages long (comprising approximately 25 percent of the work's total bulk). Entries for authors, titles, subjects, and places are interfiled in a single sequence, with typographical variation readily distinguishing these categories. The index reflects the chronological arrangement of the monographic section of the bibliography. For example, the first work on Zionism listed in the index (item no. 3718) is the earliest work on the subject to have been published in the United States.

Another feature of the index – "perhaps unique in Judaic bibliography" (p. xxii) – is the gazetteer of publishers and printers. These are found under the heading "[Name of state] Imprints," e.g., "NEW HAMPSHIRE IMPRINTS," with gazetteer entries subarranged by city and printer/publisher. Here, too, the chronological arrangement of the bibliography itself is reflected, enabling researchers "to trace the output of individual firms – be they Jewish or non-Jewish – or to compile checklists of pub-

lishing activity for any city or state within the time period covered by the present work" (pp. xxii-xxiii). As we have already noted, however, this is not a gazetteer of Hebrew typography. The *Bay Psalm Book* (Rosenbach item no. 1) and *New England's Spirit of Persecution*, by George Keith (Philadelphia or New York, 1693; Rosenbach item no. 3) – each of which contains a few words in Hebrew – are both omitted from *Judaica Americana*, since they fall into categories excluded by Singerman.

## Addenda

Toward the end of his introduction Singerman writes, "Additional material, to be sure, will surface in response to this bibliography's anticipated use and acceptance and to this end, the compiler welcomes all additions and yes, the inevitable corrections" (p. xxxi). In that spirit, I have the following addendum to offer: One week after we received *Judaica Americana*, a man walked into the YIVO Library and donated a copy of a 20-page pamphlet of Yiddish poems written by his grandfather, Yitshak Vaysbrod, *Lieder album: geklibéne lieder, 1ter band* (New York: Fisher's Printing, 1898). Other readers doubtless will submit their own addenda. (The notation "Not in Singerman" is already cropping up in antiquarian booksellers' catalogs.)

While Singerman does not promise to issue a printed supplement to his bibliography, he suggests that addenda may be included in a large-scale microfiche project that he will edit, in conjunction with the Meckler Publishing Corporation of Westport, Connecticut. The aim of this project is to produce "a microfiche collection of all non-serial texts recorded in *Judaica Americana* . . ." (p. xxii). If, as promised, this microfiche edition is published in full, then Singerman will have rendered an even greater scholarly service than he has already done, in translating the metaphor of bibliography into the reality of text by making scarce titles accessible to researchers in a very tangible way.

If there are complaints to be laid at the compiler's doorstep, they relate, on the technical level, to such matters as the occasional misprint ("George Elliot," p. xxiii, i.e., Eliot) and the erroneous transcription ("Zola, Emile. [A *gelakh's zind* . . .]," p. 927, i.e., *galekh's*; the title can

be translated as *The Sin of a Priest*). In so massive a work, errors such as these are inevitable, and one can only hope that they have been kept to a minimum through careful proofreading.

On a more substantive level, the question of what does and does not constitute "Judaica Americana" has not, one suspects, been resolved by Singerman's simple formula ("Judaic subject matter, and not the author's ancestry . . ."), as amended by his twenty categories of exclusion. Any future bibliographer working along these lines will perforce come to grips with the sort of definitional problem that so evidently tormented Singerman.\*

Do the 6,512 entries included in *Judaica Americana* truly conform to its compiler's self-established criteria? Where does one draw the line between "books . . . that . . . make no contribution to the scholarly understanding of Jewish life" and those that do? The subjective judgments of bibliographers such as Rosenbach, Wolf, and Singerman ensure that none of these bibliographers' works will ever need to be consigned to the weeding truck.

With the publication of *Judaica Americana*, Robert Singerman has cemented his reputation as America's leading Judaica bibliographer. The work's physical bulk is as massive as its intellectual scope is broad; it is, in short, a tour de force, and its compiler was the deserving recipient of the first Association of Jewish Libraries Bibliography Award (June 1991).

At a relatively young age, Singerman has already produced a formidable body

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\**Reading Singerman's introduction brought to mind the lengthy and agonizing discussions in which I participated at the Jewish Public Library of Montreal, concerning what types of materials ought to be included in, or excluded from the Library's Jewish Canadiana collection. Formerly, the selection criteria had been close to Rosenbach's for Jewish Americana, with considerable stress placed on the contributions of Jews to Canadian society; the upshot of the discussions was that selection criteria for the collection were brought closer into line with Singerman's eventual formula.*

of work. His earlier bibliographies run the gamut from *The Jews in Spain and Portugal* (New York: Garland, 1975) and *Jewish and Hebrew Onomastics* (New York: Garland, 1977), to *Antisemitic Propaganda* (New York: Garland, 1982) and *Jewish Serials of the World* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986). One wonders what subject he will tackle next. If nothing else, *Judaica Americana* has revealed a fearless, patient, and imaginative bibliographer at work. Of one thing we may be certain: whatever direction Singerman chooses to take for his next bibliographical expedition, he will not flinch at the length of the journey or at the convoluted roads that lead him to his destination.

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## GREENBAUM

(Continued from p. 66)

### Note

1. *RaMBI* was reviewed in my article, "Index of Articles on Jewish Studies and Index to Hebrew Periodicals: A Comparison." *Judaica Librarianship* vol. 1 no. 1 (Fall 1983), pp. 34-35.

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