

# RESEARCH LIBRARIES

## Creating Judaica Research Collections: The Cost-Effective Way

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### Preface

Dr. Menahem Schmelzer informed me that in the mid-sixties, when he began his affiliation with the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), he recommended that the Judaica librarians in Manhattan create a cooperative program for collection development. "Why is it necessary," he asked, "that all new books should be found in six libraries between 42nd and 185th Street?" At that time, the six libraries were: Yeshiva University, JTS, YIVO, Leo Baeck Institute, the Jewish Division of the New York Public Library, and Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR). (HUC-JIR subsequently moved out of the area to its present location on West 4th Street.) The results of this proposal (or lack thereof) are well known.

Apparently, every 25 years it takes a Hungarian to raise the issue, and I feel that it is my turn to speak up. This article is prompted by Linda Lerman's paper, "Creating Judaica Research Collections," originally presented at the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) Conference in December 1989, and subsequently published in the *AJS Newsletter* and *Judaica Librarianship* (Lerman, 1990, 1991).

### Monographs

Ms. Lerman recommends 15,000 volumes for an undergraduate library, and 30,000 for a graduate-level collection in Jewish Studies. This constitutes a 50% increase over Charles Berlin's (1974/1975) recommendation of 10,000 / 20,000 volumes, respectively. I have my doubts that 5,000-10,000 important books in Jewish Studies have been published in the past 15 years. Moreover, while new books are printed, older ones become obsolete. It is true that some obsolete titles serve as primary sources for certain researchers.

For example, a book on the Bible published in 1940 would be obsolete for Biblical studies, but may be relevant for a study on the effect of World War Two on Biblical research. It would be interesting to determine how many Judaic titles published in the U.S. between 1900 and 1960 are still used in our libraries; I expect that it is a small number.

In addition to the abovementioned figures, Ms. Lerman suggests a minimum of 75,000 volumes for a research-level Judaica collection. It is unclear how she arrived at this figure. If we consider that there are five major subfields within Jewish Studies (Bible, Talmud and Rabbinics, History, Philosophy, and Literature), perhaps we can arrive at a more reliable figure. I am convinced that a carefully-selected collection of 25,000 volumes could be considered satisfactory on the research level in all five areas. This would mean 5,000 volumes for each area, without even accounting for overlapping titles, i.e., those that pertain to two subfields.

Ms. Lerman mentions that Arthur Cohen's library of 3,000 volumes, concentrating on Jewish Philosophy, was donated to Yale University. I recall that a few years ago, the library of an unnamed scholar on Midrash and Rabbinics was up for sale, and it, too, contained only 3,000 titles. Even Jewish scholars with a wide range of interests do not have 25,000 books in their collections. For example, Salo W. Baron had 20,000, while Gershom Scholem's library consisted of 15,000 volumes. Furthermore, some of the books in these two scholars' libraries are esoteric titles that few other scholars would consult in their research.

Evans (1987, pp. 320-322) quotes several formulas to set standards for the size of college and university library collections. The Washington State formula allows 24,500 volumes for a doctoral field. The California State formula adds

5,000 volumes for each doctoral field to the 75,000-volume opening-day allowance for a new college library. These figures are hard to adapt to a specialized Judaica research library, but one must keep in mind that most new Judaica collections are created these days in college or university libraries. One hopes that the general collection of such a college or university already contains several thousand books relevant to Jewish Studies, e.g., general works on Judaica, and comparative works on religions, cultures, and languages.

Everything that has been stated thus far is relevant *only* for a new library located somewhere in a desert, with no roads, phone lines, or any other way of communicating with the outside world. In other cases, a new Judaica library should cooperate with existing libraries in the area of collection development.

At the library of the Leo Baeck Institute (LBI), the annual overall use rate of the collection is 2%, and even for the most frequently-used section (Jewish communities – Library of Congress class DS 135), only 6.7% of the books are consulted each year. In a highly specialized research library, this figure is not surprising. Judaica libraries in teaching institutions (such as JTS, or Hebrew Union College) would probably report higher figures, but I am convinced that the rate of library use in special Judaica libraries is similar to that in general university and research libraries.

Trueswell's (1969) 80/20 rule (namely, that 20% of a collection is responsible for 80% of the circulation) has been proven several times in various libraries. Most interesting is Sridhar's (1986) study of library use in a technical library over 15 years, in which he reports that 27% of the books were never used, and another 40% also had light usage (less than 5 times).

In suggesting cooperative acquisitions, I

am not referring to books necessary for coursework or even term projects, only to the research-level collection (books used for doctoral theses, or for original research by faculty members). At this level (which includes the majority of our collections), all sorts of cooperative activities should be implemented.

For a particularly well-documented case let us examine the building of a German Judaica collection at Yeshiva University (YU). Klein and Erenyi's thorough study (1985) addresses all important aspects of the project, except one: users of the collection. For whom is YU purchasing 350 German books every year? How many students are researching the history or achievements of Jews in Germany? And, with no slight intended, how many students at YU read German? But, most importantly, when YU implemented the program, weren't its librarians aware of the existence of an institute in New York dedicated solely to the history of Jews in German-speaking lands? Didn't they think that it would be easier and cheaper to send interested readers to the LBI than to acquire duplicate materials? (METRO – the New York Metropolitan Reference and Research Library Agency and interlibrary loan, which are treated at greater length below, are too slow.) Even if YU were to assume the cost of transportation, it would mean significant savings in cataloging, binding, etc.

Similar questions can be asked in other areas as well. How many people use YU's collection on Akkadian, Ugaritic, and other Near Eastern languages and cultures? Wouldn't it be more cost-effective to send all those readers to JTS or to Columbia University? Membership of JTS and YU in the Research Libraries Group (RLG) entitles all their students and faculty to use all the libraries of Columbia.

Conversely, for whom does JTS collect all new Hebrew books in Rabbinics, *halakhah*, commentaries on the Talmud, and related subjects? Wouldn't it be easier to refer all interested people to YU's library? These observations should not be interpreted as judgments on the students and faculty of the abovementioned institutions, only as practical considerations.

A similar question could be asked of Ms. Lerman. She reports that when a new

professor joined the Yale faculty, the University decided to build a strong collection in Yiddish literature. But did Yale's faculty and librarians consider how many people would use the collection? And did they keep in mind that, less than two hours away from New Haven, one can find one of the best Yiddish research libraries in the world (i.e., YIVO)? If so, why spend thousands of dollars on creating a large Yiddish collection at Yale?

Is it too unrealistic to suggest that, at least in Manhattan, Judaica libraries make an arrangement with one of the many Israeli car-services for the transportation of readers and/or books among the various institutions? (METRO takes two-three days; this would be a same-day service.) Even if the libraries were to assume all the costs of this service, they would still come out ahead, considering the savings on the acquisition, binding, and cataloging of hundreds, if not thousands, of books. Outside of Manhattan, Judaica libraries ought to create an efficient interlibrary loan network, so that, in addition to basic books on Judaica and books for courses offered, a new Judaica research library would need only a working telephone.

Grunberger (1989, p. 125) notes the three main reasons why Judaica librarians are reluctant to engage in cooperative acquisitions: (1) no agreement is forever, institutions change course, and their collections and resources are often redirected; (2) an item not acquired today is unlikely to be available tomorrow; and (3) our users prefer convenient, timely, and on-site access to the materials that they need.

To begin with the last argument, I believe that our advanced users (faculty members and doctoral students) must realize that not all the books that they need are readily available in our libraries. They ought to accept a commitment that the books they need will be delivered within a reasonable period of time (two-three days), and plan their research activities accordingly. (There are very few emergency situations in Judaica research.) This inconvenience would be offset by the great benefit that researchers would have access to the collections of other libraries.

As for the first and second arguments, I think that a carefully planned and orga-

nized cooperative arrangement could address the anticipated problems. If the participating libraries alert each other, in a timely fashion, of any changes in policy, the arrangement could be adjusted accordingly. Of course, such cooperation would depend largely on the responsible behavior of all participants. But I think the potential financial benefits warrant that Judaica librarians trust each other.

## Serials

With regard to periodicals, Ms. Lerman recommends that a research library subscribe to 500 titles, at a cost of \$7,500-\$10,000 per year. Accepting for the moment the recommendation of 500 titles, I believe that this cost estimate is misleadingly low. The average annual price of a journal subscription is closer to \$30 than to \$20. Then there are additional expenses to take into account. One has to consider the cost of binding a volume (about \$10), and, with 500 subscriptions, a library needs a full-time serials librarian (average salary, \$25,000) to check the issues in, claim missing issues, send complete volumes to the bindery, shelve them, etc. By my estimate, annual expenses for serials management would come to about \$40,000 (using Ms. Lerman's figure for subscriptions – \$10,000, plus \$5,000 for binding and \$25,000 for staff), or \$80 per volume.

It is difficult to define (a) what is Jewish and (b) what is a periodical. In the case of question (a), are we talking about periodicals that deal entirely with Jewish subjects, mostly/in part, or about periodicals that contain some articles of Jewish interest, even if only one or two a year? Question (b) is not simple to answer either. For instance, the *Yearbook* of the Leo Baeck Institute is treated in most libraries as a series of monographs, while the *Hebrew Union College Annual* (HUCA) and the *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* (PAAJR) are treated as serials.

Now let us consider how many volumes are needed. A publicity brochure of JTS entitled *The Second Century* reports 700 subscriptions in the Seminary library. Charles Berlin (1974/1975, p. 14) cited statistics of 1,000 Judaica periodicals (based on Josef Fraenkel's *The Jewish Press of the World* (1972)) including 600 Israeli periodicals. In any case, Ms. Lerman seems to be in the same

ballpark in recommending 500 titles for a new Judaica research library.

However, it is important to ask what we add to a Judaica research library with these 500 volumes, and to determine this I draw on the literature of bibliometrics.

The distribution of journal articles was first defined by Bradford (1934). In general terms, Bradford's Law states that for any given subject, the first 33% of articles will be found in a rather small number of journals, the next 33% in a larger number of periodicals, and the final third will be scattered in an extremely large number of journals with only marginal relevance to the subject. This law has been verified repeatedly, and it describes the distribution of journal articles in most subject areas.

To determine how Bradford's Law applies to Judaic Studies, I analyzed volume 29 (1989) of *Index of Articles on Jewish Studies*, or RAMBI; this volume covers publications issued in 1987. A methodological limitation of this study lies in the restricted coverage of RAMBI (Greenbaum, 1983). RAMBI is selective, late, and relevant citations are missing. (For instance, the 1989 volume cites only one article from vol. 3 (1987) of *Judaica Librarianship*.) For the present study, articles listed in vol. 29 of RAMBI that date from before 1987 were included, bearing in mind that additional articles from that year will likely be indexed in subsequent volumes of RAMBI.

3,795 articles are listed in volume 29 of RAMBI. Of these, 381 appear in collections (such as conference proceedings and Festschriften), which would be cataloged as monographs in most libraries. In certain cases, several articles are lumped together under one numbered entry in RAMBI. Adding these to the previously-mentioned entries, and subtracting the entries for collections yield the following figures:

1,244 articles in 53 periodicals, with 16 or more articles indexed from each;

1,277 articles in 140 periodicals, with 6-15 articles indexed from each;

1,182 articles in 658 periodicals, with 5 or fewer articles indexed from each.

Total: 3,703 articles in 851 periodicals (an average of 4.35 articles per periodical title).

These results clearly confirm that Bradford's Law applies to Jewish Studies journal literature: 2,229 articles (60%) are contained in 147 journals (17%).

If my calculation of \$80 as the overall cost for a volume is correct, an article in a journal with 8 articles would cost \$10. If 4 articles are relevant to Jewish Studies, the cost to the library of each is \$20. Any other method of document delivery would be more cost-effective than maintaining bound volumes. Journals that have 8 or more articles indexed in vol. 29 of RAMBI are listed in the Appendix. This list is included only to satisfy the curiosity of readers; it is not intended to be used as a checklist of Judaica periodicals. There are serious omissions, probably because issues of some journals did not arrive in time for inclusion in this volume of RAMBI. For example, *PAAJR* is not listed at all, *Hadoar* has only 7 entries, and *Kiryat sefer* only 6. On the other hand, certain general journals appear in the appendix because they happened to have a special issue dealing with a Jewish topic (e.g., *Studies in Formative Spirituality* had a special issue on "Spiritual Formation; Contemporary Jewish Perspectives"; *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* had an issue devoted to "The Price of Peace: The Removal of the Israeli Settlements in Sinai"). The list nevertheless shows that the majority of the articles relating to Jewish Studies are published in a fairly limited number of journals. Of course, individual institutions could further trim the list, depending on their areas of specialization. For instance, in an institution where no Biblical research is done, there is no need to subscribe to any of the Biblical journals on the list.

Most scholars have already discovered Bradford's Law from practical experience. They pay close attention to 10-15 journals in their field of interest, often subscribe to these journals, and use the rest only if reference is made to them. The result is that Judaica periodical collections are severely underutilized. For instance, at LBI, 120 journals are collected, although they are hardly ever used. The Institute subscribes to *Commentary*, *Midstream*, *Jewish*

*Quarterly Review*, *Revue des Etudes Juives*, and several others that are available in at least five other libraries in Manhattan, even though some of these periodicals do not contain any articles on the history of German Jewry. Still, the librarians of the Institute feel that they have to subscribe to these periodicals in order to maintain the image of a major Judaica research library. The column in *Judaica Librarianship* entitled "Serially Speaking" is designed to inform librarians about new journals; perhaps it should instead report who is already subscribing to these journals.

One source of the problem is that scholars search for relevant *articles*, while libraries keep track of *journals*. Judaica librarians should take a deep breath and cancel most of their subscriptions, except for a few carefully-selected and frequently-used titles. For the rest, two forms of cooperation can be envisaged. On the one hand, libraries could divide up the available titles, so that each periodical would be found in only one library. The esoteric periodicals survey of the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies (Cutter, 1983) constituted a first step in this direction.

The only area where I find that Judaica librarians are willing to cooperate is in the collecting of newspapers ("Let somebody else bother with them"). This, however, is not the best attitude. Historians routinely consult old newspapers as important primary sources for the history of the 19th and early 20th century. We owe it to future generations to collect and preserve all Jewish newspapers and congregational newsletters. Of course, here, too, it would suffice for each title to be collected by one library – let's just make sure that somebody, somewhere, collects it.

Alternatively, Judaica libraries could create one center for journals, while sharing the expenses of the upkeep of such a center. The advantage of this solution is that there would be one central institution in charge of the entire operation. The center could supply articles to the various member libraries, as well as create a Judaica online database for journal articles. Citations from RAMBI could serve as the basis for such a database. The project would also be facilitated by the fact that many Judaica journals are already indexed in various databases

and are accessible via DIALOG, as has been pointed out by Yael Penkower (1991). Relevant references could be easily downloaded into the Judaica database. Member libraries would collect individual articles in folders, instead of rarely used bound volumes.

I am not advocating illegal activity here. I am convinced that even if libraries were to pay all of the costs of photocopying, copyright clearance, downloading, communications, and overnight delivery, serious savings would be realized, as compared with the present situation. And a Judaica online database would make the articles accessible, not only available. All the technical prerequisites – computer networks, online databases, fax and photocopying machines, telephone lines, next-day delivery – are available in our libraries. There is so much talk among Judaica librarians regarding cooperation in cataloging, preservation, microfilming, and even exchange of duplicates. I believe that the time has arrived to start discussing cooperative acquisitions as well.

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#### Appendix: Journals Indexed in RAMBI with at least 8 Citations in Vol. 29, 1989.

The journals are arranged in descending order of frequency of citation. Romanized titles are in italics.

No. of citations	Title of journal
57	Sinai
49	<i>Erets Yisrael</i>
42	Vetus Testamentum
36	<i>Bet mikra</i>
34	<i>Mehkarim be-lashon</i>
31	Biblische Notizen
30	Judaism
29	<i>Katedrah</i>
29	<i>Moznayim</i>
28	Jewish Art
28	<i>Kivunim</i>
27	Zeitschrift fuer Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
26	<i>Gesher</i>
26	Review and Expositor
26	Yad-Vashem Studies
25	Israel Exploration Journal
25	Jerusalem Quarterly
24	Bar-Ilan Annual
23	Midstream
23	<i>Pe'amim</i>
23	<i>Yisrael – 'am va-arets</i>
22	Biblica
22	<i>Ha-ma'yan</i>
22	Journal of Jewish Studies
22	<i>Rive'on le-khalkalah</i>
22	Tarbiz
21	Ariel
21	<i>Shema'atin</i>
20	Hebrew Annual Review
20	Ou-Testamentiese
	Werkgemeenskap in Suid-Afrika
20	Pardès
20	Revue des Etudes Juives
20	Ugarit Forschungen
19	Biblical Archaeology Review
19	<i>Berit 'ivrit 'olamit</i>
19	<i>Da'at</i>
19	Eretz magazine
19	Israelitische Kultusgemeinde
	Fuerth. Nachrichten
19	Leo Baeck Institute. Yearbook
19	<i>Sekirah hodshit</i>
18	Prooftexts
18	Qedem
18	Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici
17	Holocaust and Genocide Studies
17	<i>Kadmoniyot</i>
17	<i>Kesher</i>
17	<i>Mehkere Yerushalayim be-mahshevet Yisra'el</i>

16	<i>Asufot</i>	10	Israel Social Science Research
16	Dor le dor	10	Jewish Quarterly
16	<i>Megamot</i>	10	Massuah
16	Rivista Biblica. Roma	10	Rabbinical Council of America.
16	Studies in American Jewish Literature	10	Journal of Jewish Thought
16	Tribuene	10	Studia Rosenthaliana
15	<i>Bitsaron</i>	10	<i>Talpiyot</i>
15	<i>Ha-tsiyonut</i>	9	'Am ve-sefer
15	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament	9	American Jewish History
15	Journal of Palestine Studies	9	Babylon
15	<i>Leshonenu</i>	9	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
15	Palestine Exploration Journal	9	Commentary
15	<i>Shenaton la-mikra</i>	9	Conservative Judaism
14	Catholic Biblical Quarterly	9	Contemporary Jewry
14	'Iton 77	9	Harvard Theological Review
14	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society	9	Hebrew Union College Annual
14	<i>Shenaton ha-mishpat ha-'ivri</i>	9	International Journal of the Sociology of Language
14	Tikkun	9	Israel Law Review
13	'Ale si'ah	9	'Iyunim
13	Andrews University Seminary Studies	9	Jewish Language Review
13	Aula Orientalis	9	Jewish Social Studies
13	'Idan	9	Journal of Semitic Studies
13	Modern Jewish Studies	9	<i>Ma'gele keriah</i>
13	Modern Judaism	9	Middle East Annual
13	Revue Biblique	9	Middle Eastern Studies
13	Zion	9	National Jewish Law Review
12	<i>Bi-sede hemed</i>	9	Sefarad
12	Bulletin des Leo Baeck Instituts	9	Studies in Formative Spirituality
12	Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	9	Yiddish
12	Journal of Biblical Literature	8	'Akhshav
12	Judaica	8	American-Arab Affairs
12	Proceedings of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists	8	<i>Bi-shevile ha-tehiyah</i>
12	Studium Biblicum Franciscanum	8	Biblical Archaeologist
11	Bible Review	8	Bibliotheca Orientalis
11	Biblische Zeitschrift	8	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
11	<i>Bitahon sotsial</i>	8	Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses
11	<i>Gal'ed</i>	8	<i>Halamish</i>
11	<i>Ha-refu'ah</i>	8	Hebrew Studies
11	Israel Journal of Earth Sciences	8	<i>Hevrah u-revaḥah</i>
11	Journal of Reform Judaism	8	Humboldt Journal of Social Relations
11	Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages	8	Interpretation
11	Journal of the American Oriental Society	8	Lerntage des Zentrums fuer Antisemitismusforschung
11	New Testament Studies	8	Nordisk Judaistik
11	<i>Ofakim be-geografiyah</i>	8	Patterns of Prejudice
11	Studies in Zionism	8	Romanian Jewish Studies
10	'Ale sefer	8	Rumbos en el Judaismo
10	Bibbia e Oriente	8	<i>Yedi'ot aḥaronot</i>
10	Buletyn Zydowskiego Instytutu Historycznego	8	Yod
10	Christian Jewish Relations		
10	<i>Goldene keyt</i>		
10	<i>Ha-praklit</i>		
10	Immanuel		
10	Institute of Jewish Affairs. Research Report		

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