

Vol. 23 Editor's Note

Rachel Leket-Mor

Arizona State University Library

The Hebrew word *yad* has several meanings in addition to its literal one, hand. One particular figurative sense of the word is a memorial or a memorialization project, such as in the name of the Holocaust remembrance center, Yad Vashem (borrowed from *Isaiah 56:6*). Most of the contributions in this issue of *Judaica Librarianship* (JL) commemorate horrific catastrophes in the history of the Jewish people through their lasting effects on Jewish individuals, organizations, heritage institutions such as libraries and archives, and information professionals. In this sense, Volume 23 is a *yad* to Jewish book and archival collections but also to stewards of the written word and cultural memory: librarians and archivists, authors and publishers, and booksellers.

The current issue gives voice to library and archive professionals who spare no effort to care for collections and commemoration work. **Ahava Cohen** and **Ester Taga** of the National Library of Israel share their experiences in a self-reflective essay about creating authority records for the Bearing Witness project, commemorating the victims of October 7th and fallen soldiers during the ensuing, ongoing war in Israel. Information professionals, as many of us know, often find themselves involved personally in their work; yet the intensive level of involvement reported in this essay is an emotional toll that very few of us imagined they would have to face in their professional life. It is probably the most personal essay ever published in JL, representing librarians' work while living through trauma and loss, and it is published with a trigger warning for readers and a call for emotional support for information professionals in similar situations.

Other contributions of personal nature in this issue include an essay by **Ellen Frankel**, past editor in chief (1991–2009) of the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), and an interview with **Liesbeth Heenk**, the founder and editor in chief of Amsterdam Publishers (2012–present). The two experienced publishers share their stance on publishing Holocaust memoirs and comment on their sentiments of and practices in the craft of memorialization. Their different approaches to the boundaries of historical memory (“Who owns the Holocaust? Who will tell the story?” asks Frankel) are reflected in their editorial choices. While Frankel focused on materials created during the Shoah and overall acquired fewer than a dozen Holocaust-related books, only two of which were memoirs,¹ Heenk specializes in publishing second- and third-generation memoirs, translating them into multiple languages, and distributing them widely.

1. In an email note (June 18, 2024), Frenkel stated that, “we adhered quite ‘religiously’ to our policy of sticking to primary material created between 1933–1946.”

Four additional contributions relate to the Holocaust by studying the fate of book collections during and after World War II, with special attention to collections amassed in Germany. **Bettina Farack** studies the library collection of the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Higher Institute for Jewish Studies) in Berlin. She traces the tortured journey of the Hochschule books following their theft by the Nazis and also the routes of other Nazi-looted Jewish books. Her article follows the history of the library and its staff, describes the library’s role in sustaining the social fabric of Berlin’s Jewish community, and chronicles its destruction from 1933 to its final closure in 1942. Farack’s article accompanies a digital exhibit titled *The Library of Lost Books*, co-curated by Farack, Kinga Bloch, and Irene Aue-Ben-David,² that brings the Hochschule library to life and calls for public participation in the effort of discovering items from its lost collections. Recovered books are listed on a project page³ that presents their whereabouts since the Nazi ransack and through their current location—digitally reuniting them with other Hochschule books. This educational, multilingual project gained quite a lot of attention in the media and exposed the public to the ongoing discussion about Judaica provenance. The Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) has long been engaged in similar efforts, as demonstrated by past issues of this publication and in the collaboration with the International Forum on Judaica Provenance and the National Library of Israel, culminating in the publication of a white paper titled “Cultivating Best Practices in Judaica Provenance (May 2024).”⁴

Zvi Barsky’s essay, “Jewish Immigrant Booksellers from Germany and Central Europe in Palestine, 1933–1939,” is an abridged, translated version of his 2019 Hebrew monumental study, *Making a Mark: Booksellers in Palestine, 1870–1948*. Barsky’s collection of rare booksellers’ labels, his thorough scan of period newspapers, and interviews with dozens of people, reveal that many of the 1930s booksellers in Mandatory Palestine were German Jews fleeing the Nazis with their most treasured possession—their personal libraries. Barsky’s essay highlights the cultural agency of booksellers,⁵ a recurring theme in our journal. Both previous JL-published surveys of Jewish bookstores, in Turkey’s Istanbul by Rifat Bali⁶ and in the Republic of Ecuador by Irene Munster,⁷ noted a strong engagement of German Jews in the field. Barsky’s contribution to this thread adds to the discussion about the fate of Jewish private collections and points to connections between libraries and bookstores, including book owners who became booksellers or worked in libraries, and private collections that formed the core of lending libraries.

2. “The Library of the Lost Books,” <https://libraryoflostbooks.com>.

3. “The Book List,” <https://libraryoflostbooks.com/books/?layout=table>.

4. “Cultivating Best Practices in Judaica Provenance,” 2024, <https://jewishlibraries.org/publications/white-paper-on-judaica-provenance>.

5. See Robert Darnton’s seminal article, “What is the History of Books?” *Daedalus* 111 (3): 65–83, 1982. <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:3403038>.

6. Rifat Bali, “Istanbul’s Jewish Bookstores: Monuments to a Bygone Era.” *Judaica Librarianship* 20: 159–79, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.14263/2330-2976.1213>.

7. Irene Munster, “Jewish German Immigrant Booksellers in Twentieth-Century Ecuador,” *Judaica Librarianship*, 22: 57–72, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.14263/22/2022/517>.

Joshua Shelly's review of Julia Schneidawind's 2023 book also discusses the fate of private libraries of German Jews, focusing on Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), Karl Wolfskehl (1869–1948), Jakob Wassermann (1873–1934), Stefan Zweig (1881–1942), and Lion Feuchtwanger (1884–1958) and the whereabouts of the books that these five intellectuals collected and used in their work.

The fourth piece related to Jewish book collections in Germany is **Rachel Heuberger**'s essay. Heuberger, now retired, served as Aron Freimann's successor at the Frankfurt University Library's Judaica and Hebraica department. She reports on the naming of the public square adjacent to the library after the trailblazing couple Therese and Aron Freimann—one a fearless social activist and the other a renowned *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholar and bibliographer. Her essay reviews the couple's life story and extraordinary achievements, each in their own field: Therese's lifelong social work initiatives in Frankfurt am Main and later in New York City, and Aron's bibliographical, bio-bibliographical, and historic-geographical research in Jewish studies and especially his pioneering work on union catalogs for Hebrew manuscripts and incunabula. The 1932 Judaica Catalogue of the Frankfurt Library collection, compiled and published by Aron Freimann, played a key role in keeping the Frankfurt Judaica collection in one place during the Nazi era and the immediate postwar period. It was also thanks to his catalogue records that the Virtual Freimann Collection was established,⁸ reconstructing the historic Judaica collection with digital copies from other libraries.

Another collection reuniting project is presented in **Stefanie Halpern**'s article, "The Edward Blank YIVO Vilna Online Collections Project: A Case Study." It is the second and complementary part of her 2022 article, that followed the history of YIVO's prewar archival collections over a quarter of a century.⁹ The current article describes YIVO's ambitious plan to reunite its prewar collections held in its New York homebase and at three other libraries in Lithuania, the challenges that the 7-year project faced, and the best practices the institute developed while digitizing 8,000 books and 1.5 million pages of archival documents, most of them in Yiddish.

Nathan Cohen's bibliographical study surveys a particular book format that was popular with Yiddish readers in the half century preceding World War II. The popular "library" booklets (*bibliotekn* in Yiddish) covered a variety of topics, tailored to many types of readerships while providing useful information or short-form fiction reads in affordable price. Many of these booklets are now lost forever together with their Jewish communities. Cohen's article and bibliography of publishers and *bibliotekn* series (or fragments of them) serve as both a reminder for a seldom

8. <https://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/freimann>.

9. Stefanie Halpern, "A History of YIVO's Prewar Archival Collections from 1925 to 2001," *Judaica Librarianship* 22 (2022): 20–40. <https://doi.org/10.14263/22/2022/707>.

explored subject, the question of format, and a *yad* to destroyed Jewish books and communities of readers.

A very different collection of fragments is presented in the book, “The Cairo Genizah and the Age of Discovery in Egypt: The History and Provenance of a Jewish Archive,” published by our very own **Rebecca Jefferson** and reviewed by **Amalia Levi**. As Levi comments, “Jefferson has written not only a deeply erudite book, based on sleuthing and painstaking research, but also a breathtaking account that reads like a novel.” We had a similar reading experience with her 2017 article in this journal.¹⁰ The book presents a reconstructed provenance of the Cairo Genizah components, dispersed around the world due to the interposition of many actors, among them librarians.

Our Jewish Studies/Digital Humanities column, dubbed JS/DS, is back with past AJL President, **Michelle Margolis**, focusing this time on projects built around specific books. The Scatter of the Literature column covering the last two years was compiled by **Konstanze Kunst** with attention to far-flung studies in several languages, and is therefore arranged by language. Another feature of our bibliographical column is a new public Zotero group, “JUDAICA Librarianship Bibliography” (see the 2023–2024 collection for the current list). The new 2025 collection will be “work in progress,” and complete metadata will be added gradually by the end of the year. You are welcome to join the group, download any or all citations, and share them widely.¹¹ For recommending new citations, please watch out for a new submission form, which will be shared soon. A big thank-you to Konstanze Kunst for joining JL and for her help in setting up that Zotero group!

In the last two years, our AJL community was saddened to learn of the passing of several librarians who made special contributions to the field of Judaica librarianship and/or this journal. Among the deceased were Žilvinas Beliauskas, head of the Vilnius Jewish Public Library of the Lithuanian National Library, Paul Hamburg of the University of California at Berkeley, Jean Lettovsky of Siegal College of Judaic Studies (Cleveland, OH), Ilana Tahan who served as the Lead Curator for Hebrew and Christian Orient Collections at the British Library, and two past AJL Presidents: Phil Miller of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in New York (1980–1982) and Linda Lerman (1990–1992), who also edited the 2003 issue of JL (Vol. 11). *Yehi zikhram barukh*. In this issue, we publish tributes to two major actors in our profession—the late Menahem Schmelzer and Marcia W. Posner. **David Sclar**’s tribute to Schmelzer is based on his own and others’ recollections of the great scholar and bibliographer. It

10. Rebecca Jefferson, “Dangerous Liaisons in Cairo: Reginald Q. Henriques and the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Manuscript Collection,” *Judaica Librarianship* 20 (2017) :21–51. <https://doi.org/10.14263/2330-2976.1212>.

11. https://www.zotero.org/groups/5155481/judaica_librarianship_bibliography, or search for “JUDAICA Librarianship Bibliography” on the Groups page.

is a special honor for me to end this issue with a tribute written by JL's founder and editor (Vols. 1–10), **Bella Hass Weinberg**, to her knowledgeable co-editor Marcia W. Posner (Vols. 1–4), who also served as AJL President (1988–1990).

In more auspicious news, Dr. Ariann Stern and Haim A. Gottschalk have generously established the **Manfred Gottschalk Judaica Librarianship Endowment** to support the publication of *Judaica Librarianship* in memory of Manfred Gottschalk. On behalf of the JL editorial board, I offer our heartfelt and manifold thanks for securing the future of AJL's peer-reviewed journal!

Lastly, I would like to thank the following individuals who contributed their time and talent to making this issue what it is. **Nancy Sack**, who retired from the University of Hawaii at Manoa in mid-2024, provided critical copyediting assistance for one of the articles and guidance regarding another. **Paula Breger** (Temple Emanu-El in Haverhill, Massachusetts), **Josh Shelly** (Potsdam University Library), and **Amanda Widom** (JDC Archives) have commendably assisted with copyediting of the rest of the articles. **Shoshana Traum** and **Anthony Catanese** helped with proofreading some of the articles. Special thanks are due to **Aaron Taub** and **Zachary Baker** for their good advice, and to **Yossi Galron** for his practical help with the many Yiddish Romanization challenges and several bibliographical conundrums. In addition to copyediting, Josh Shelly also advised me regarding open access best practices, hence the addition of copyright information on each of the articles. Thank you, all! The release of the Chicago Manual of Style's 18th edition in 2024 added an unexpected hindrance to my workflow, and I thank Paula Breger for keeping me on track with its *hidushim* (new guidelines). After much thought, I decided to adopt most of them while breaking off with others. For example, the new citation rules advocating the removal of place of publication in book citations (CMS 14.30) and page numbers in book chapter citations (CMS 14.8) may not suit the scarce and rare publications cited on the pages of our journal.

The next volume of JL will be a special issue, dedicated to Canadian collections. It will be guest-edited by **Nadav Sharon** (University of Toronto Libraries) and **Hannah Srour-Zackon** (Congregation Shaar Hashomayim Archives, Montreal, Quebec). Starting in that next issue, **Katalin Rac** of Emory University Libraries will join JL as editor of the book review section. Thank you, Nadav, Hannah, and Katalin!

Wishing our readers a peaceful, restorative new year,
Rachel Leket-Mor, Editor