

A Tribute to Dr. Marcia (Weiss) Posner (1931–2023)

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Marcia Posner (1931–2023). Photo source: the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center website

In 2023, when the panel for the 40th anniversary of *Judaica Librarianship* (*JL*) was being formed for the AJL Conference, I was asked to contact my former co-editor, Marcia Posner (1985–1989). I had spoken with her a few years earlier, but in the spring of 2023, I got no answer when I called her home number, her work number, or even when I tried calling her daughter, Amy. I was then asked to speak about Marcia at the beginning of that conference session.

I had not been acquainted with Marcia before I started to work with her on *JL*, and so I was unfamiliar with her many activities relating to the AJL division of synagogue, school, and center libraries (SSC; currently SSCPL, including public libraries) as well as Jewish children’s literature. Coincidentally, two weeks before the *JL* panel, my sister Mala Glanz found her introduction of Marcia, given at a program of the AMIT Shoshana Chapter of West Hempstead [New York] during Jewish Book Month in November 1990. Some of the facets of Marcia’s career were thus presented at the panel on *Judaica Librarianship*:

Dr. Posner has taught children’s and young adult literature at Queens College. At present, Dr. Posner is the Judaica Library Consultant for the Jewish Book Council and the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. She teaches courses on Judaica librarianship, and supplies guidance, information, and materials to librarians throughout the U.S., Canada, Mexico, South America, and Israel. She is the author of several books, including *Jewish Children’s Books: How to Choose Them, How to Use Them*.

It was a pleasure to work with Marcia. Often, we held meetings of the *JL* editorial board at St. John’s University, Queens Campus, where I was a professor in the Division of Library and Information Science. In addition to her editing role, Marcia contributed 17 articles to *JL*, including lengthy essays such as “Towards Improved Subject Analysis on the Holocaust in the Synagogue

and School Library,”¹ “The Association of Jewish Libraries: A Chronicle,”² and “Jewish Children’s Literature Around the World: A Survey.”³

Linda Burghardt’s tribute to Marcia⁴ sent to ha-Safran by AJL’s current President, Sean Boyle (August 20, 2024), reveals that Marcia passed away less than half a year after AJL’s 2023 Conference, on December 15th. The subtitle of Linda’s article has five job titles for Marcia: “Author, Playwright, Scholar, Educator, Librarian,” and I would add Editor, and President of AJL, of course (1988–1990).

In the following paragraphs, I quote from other tributes to Marcia posted on ha-Safran. Many of the words of praise in these tributes echo the advice given in *Pirke Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers),⁵ cited below.

Wendy A. Marx, President of AJL’s Long Island Chapter, wrote that “Marcia was a wonderful friend, mentor, fount of knowledge, and a tremendous asset to me in my role as a Judaica librarian . . . I’ll forever cherish our friendship along with her smile, laughter, wisdom, and just an all-around mensch” (August 27, 2024). These sentiments about Marcia’s character were echoed in several other posts to ha-Safran.

Regarding Marcia’s smile, *Pirke Avot* 1:15 says, “Receive every person with a facial expression that is pleasant.” For Marcia’s laughter, chapter 3, verse 16 states, “Be welcoming to every person with happiness.” Regarding being a *mensch*, *Pirke Avot* 2:1 says, “What is the proper path that a man should choose for himself: Any [deed] that is a credit to the one who does it and earns him the esteem from [other] people” (ArtScroll multiple translations).

Pirke Avot 4:13 states that the crown of a good name is the highest level. Chapter 6, verse 9 states, “. . . when a [person] passes away there accompany him neither gold nor silver, nor precious stones nor pearls, but Torah and good deeds alone” (Sefaria translation).

1. Marcia W. Posner, “Towards Improved Subject Analysis on the Holocaust in the Synagogue and School Library,” *Judaica Librarianship* 2 (1986): 49–54. <https://doi.org/10.14263/2/1985/871>.

2. Marcia W. Posner, “The Association of Jewish Libraries: A Chronicle,” *Judaica Librarianship* 5, no. 2 (1991): 110–50. <https://doi.org/10.14263/5/1991/1247>.

3. Marcia W. Posner, “Jewish Children’s Literature Around the World: A Survey,” *Judaica Librarianship* 7 (1993): 8–21. <https://doi.org/10.14263/7/1993/605>.

4. “A Tribute to Marcia Posner: Author, Playwright, Scholar, Educator, Librarian,” Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center (Glen Cove, NY), <https://www.hmtcli.org/marcia-posner> (January 4, 2024).

5. *Pirke Avot*=*Mishnah Avot*, plus one chapter.

Marcia herself was concerned with ethics. She started the Jewish Values Finder tool for librarians, for the purpose of identifying Jewish values found in books written for Jewish children and teens in English or in translation. It is now maintained by AJL.⁶ *Pirke Avot* 6:6 praises the one who learns in order to teach. Based on the Jewish Values Finder, Marcia initiated the print guide, *Juvenile Judaica*, and shared her expertise through her college courses. The first chapter of *Pirke Avot* (verse 1) says, “Develop many disciples,” and it’s clear that Marcia did this.

Regarding Marcia’s professional contributions, Amalia Warshenbrot wrote to ha-Safran (August 21, 2024) that, “Marcia’s article in *Judaica Librarianship* about the first 25 years of AJL proved, more than anything, her commitment to our organization and to her researching and writing skills as well” (see footnote 2 above).

Ms. Burghardt’s tribute notes that Marcia founded the Louis Posner Memorial Library at the Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County.

Arlene Ratzabi wrote to ha-Safran (August 27, 2024) that, “Marcia was the most helpful and generous person I met as I was attempting to set up a special Holocaust section of my library. Marcia was a true expert in this area and offered many ideas and even showered me with books as well. She was a true professional who took pride in sharing her enormous well of knowledge.” Given the frequent cases of Holocaust denial and accusations of genocide against Israel, Holocaust collections in local libraries are of immense importance.

Aileen Grossberg added to Ms. Ratzabi’s post (same date): “I was a self-trained volunteer synagogue librarian when Marcia gave a course in Jewish children’s literature at Bergen County Community College. Those notes were my Bible until I went to library school later. She was a wonderful teacher. . . .” Marcia taught a similar course at Queens College.

It was a privilege to have known Marcia and to have worked with her for many years. From the preceding selection of tributes, it is clear that she enhanced the professional skills of many people, and she will not be forgotten. As Wendy Marx wrote, “her *Judaica* library legacy will live on through all of us, as librarians, educators and professionals.”

Fred Isaac concluded his post to ha-Safran (August 21, 2024) as follows: “May her memory be a blessing, as she blessed us in AJL.”

6. <https://jewishlibraries.org/jewish-values-finder-overview>.