Cataloging Heresy: Challenging the Standard Bibliographic Product, Proceedings of the Congress for Librarians, 1991, with additional contributed papers. Edited by Bella Hass Weinberg. Medford, NJ: Learned Information, 1992. xii, 217 p., $35.

Pamela R. Gillespie
Hunter College Library

Recommended Citation

Gillespie, Pamela R.. 1994. "Cataloging Heresy: Challenging the Standard Bibliographic Product, Proceedings of the Congress for Librarians, 1991, with additional contributed papers. Edited by Bella Hass Weinberg. Medford, NJ: Learned Information, 1992. xii, 217 p., $35.." *Judaica Librarianship* 8: 23-24. doi:10.14263/2330-2976.1223.

CATALOG DEPARTMENT

Cataloging Heresy: Challenging the Standard Bibliographic Product, Proceedings of the Congress for Librarians, 1991, with additional contributed papers.
Edited by Bella Hass Weinberg.
Medford, NJ: Learned Information, 1992. xii, 217 p., $35.

Reviewed by:
Pamela R. Gillespie
Hunter College Library
New York, NY

***Abstract:* Can a single set of centrally supplied descriptive access points, subject headings, and classification numbers meet the needs of all types of library users?** *Cataloging Heresy,* **the expanded proceedings of the 1991 Congress for Librarians held at St. John's University, addresses the issue of shared, homogeneous cataloging from the viewpoints of professionals in various library and information technology settings. This review discusses the papers presented from the perspective of their implications for access to and description of Judaica materials.**

Introduction

Is a balanced discussion of heresy an oxymoron?

As an attendee at the St. John's University Congress for Librarians in 1991, of which this volume is the proceedings, I noted the diversity of viewpoints represented. Reading the proceedings for this review reminded me of the many perspectives provided by the Congress speakers.

Dr. Bella Hass Weinberg, Congress chair and proceedings editor, asked professionals from academic, special, public, and national libraries; library educators; and representatives of bibliographic utilities whether a single set of centrally supplied descriptive access points, subject headings, and classification numbers can serve the needs of all types of library users.

The speakers' responses have significant implications for the treatment of Judaica materials in both general and special

libraries. In my library, which almost automatically accepts the standard bibliographic product—as found on OCLC—for its regular collections, the issues which arise concerning the cataloging of the substantial Judaica portion of the collection lead to much discussion and, usually, alteration of the standard bibliographic product. In this review, I report on the explicitly Judaic content of the papers in the volume.

Points of Interest to Judaica Catalogers

Norman Elliott Anderson (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary Library), in "The Non-Neutrality of Descriptive Cataloging," addresses the subject of romanization—partially required under AACR2 and fully required by OCLC—as more difficult (or impossible) to work with than original script by persons who know the language and are likely to use publications in non-Roman scripts.

Mr. Anderson also argues, in his postscript, for the removal of bias in the uniform titles for the "Old Testament" and its parts, and in the handling of various canons of the Bible; he suggests alternative uniform titles such as "Bible (Jewish canon)" or "Bible (Tanakh)" as less discriminatory than current headings.

Sanford Berman (Hennepin County Library), long a proponent of reality-based modification of Library of Congress cataloging copy, focuses in his paper, "Cataloging Tools and 'Copy': The Myth of Acceptability: A Public Librarian's Viewpoint," on the vocabulary of subject cataloging, charging that it is often awkward, obsolete, inadequately cross-referenced, and inaccurate. He cites the example of

"loaded" primitive forms which misname ethnic groups, such as LC's use of **Falashas** instead of the people's preferred term, Beta Israel. *[LC has since changed the heading* **Falashas** *to* **Jews, Ethiopian.** *See Joseph Galron's column in this issue.—Ed.]*

Ed Glazier (Research Libraries Group), in his presentation, "The Display and Indexing of Customized Catalog Records in RLIN," discusses the capability of the Research Libraries Information Network for non-Roman cataloging data, and mentions RLG's required romanization of the title and imprint fields. Although vernacular cataloging is available on RLIN, record clustering (storage together of records for the same item) can be based only on the obligatory romanized data fields in the record, since input of original script data is optional. Searching with a non-Roman access point retrieves a cluster if an institution has input non-Roman data in addition to romanization.

Any technical services manager would be well served by asking him/herself the questions posed by Mary Parr of St. John's University Libraries. Even though the answers for Judaica libraries may differ significantly from Ms. Parr's, the questions in her paper, "Standard Cataloging Data and the Academic Library: The Technical Services Manager's Point of View," point out inconsistencies and errors in standard cataloging copy very clearly.

Ms. Parr—citing the example of the book entitled *Downloading/Uploading Online Databases and Catalogs,* containing Cataloging in Publication data with the erroneous LC class number of Z6374.7 (a number meaning special topics in subject

bibliography relating to Jews)—questions the usefulness to the user community of classing the subject of downloading in Judaica bibliography. She further asks whether it is more advantageous to class the book incorrectly for the sake of uniformity, or instead to choose a correct number from the classification schedule.

Presenting LC's perspective as a national library, Chief of the Descriptive Cataloging Division John Byrum in "Standard Cataloging Data: The View from the Library of Congress" acknowledges special user needs and argues that customizing and enhancing the standard bibliographic description should operate within the framework of existing standards. He also notes, however, that subject cataloging lacks an internationally agreed-upon basis for application, and offers the perspective that continued development and application of Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) will be increasingly influenced by outside users. The implication of his statement for Judaica librarians is that we should keep up the pressure for change in LCSH and its application.

Mr. Byrum maintains that the ability/willingness to accept or challenge standardized cataloging copy is limited only by an institution's monetary resources, echoing an underlying premise of the second part of the volume: contributed papers dealing with specialized collections in music, women's studies, cartographic databases, nonprint materials, and alternative classification schemes.

Alterations to the standard bibliographic product described in the various contributed papers—everything from extensive use of the notes area, added subject access from both LCSH and local sources, and fuller exploitation of specificity available in LCSH but often not used by the Library of Congress itself—can readily be applied in Judaica cataloging if libraries are willing to commit the necessary time and monetary resources.

Presentation and Design of the Work

Often, conference proceedings are not only dry and dull in content, but drab and uninteresting in published format. *Cataloging Heresy* is none of these, excelling in clarity of presentation, both intellectually and visually. The volume is well organized and laid out, and tables and figures accompanying the papers are clear and pertinent.

I found the index, compiled by Edward Swanson, somewhat less helpful, omitting references I especially needed. For example, the entry for romanization refers only to page 18 (Anderson's paper), ignoring the discussion of the topic in relation to the RLIN database.

Conclusions

This work's utility for Judaica librarians is twofold:
—It suggests creative solutions to specialized user needs within the framework of existing cataloging standards, and
—It recommends continued lobbying for change, for inclusive language, and for removal of bias.

That these presentations are made in a highly readable fashion from a variety of perspectives is an added bonus.

———

Pamela R. Gillespie is Associate Librarian for Systems and Technical Services at Hunter College Library (City University of New York) and a former cataloger at YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.