


6-13-2014

Letter to the Editor

Bella Hass Weinberg
St. John's University, prof_wberg@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ajlpublishing.org/jl>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), [Information Literacy Commons](#), [Jewish Studies Commons](#), [Reading and Language Commons](#), and the [Scholarly Communication Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Weinberg, Bella Hass. 2014. "Letter to the Editor." *Judaica Librarianship* 18: 5-10. doi:10.14263/2330-2976.1060.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Rachel,

Thank you for inviting me to contribute an essay to volume 18 of *Judaica Librarianship*. Given that 18 is the numerical value of *Chai* (popular Romanization), our recent email exchange is relevant. On March 26, 2014, I wrote to you:

I recall a conversation with my late mother one *Motzaei Shabbat*. She asked what my plans were for the evening, and I replied, “I’m working on the journal.” “You give your life for that journal,” my mother said, and I responded, “The journal will live on after me.” Thanks for contributing to that vision.

The next day, you responded:

I was deeply moved by your comment, Bella. My husband also tells me again and again (probably every night!) that I give my life to “that journal.”... Like you, I also hope that it will live after me. . . .

Since we’ve mentioned family members, here may be the place to position the photo you invited me to submit—a candid taken in 1986 of me holding my daughter, Kira Zahava, aged two and a half months, at an editing session of the journal held at my house in Pelham Parkway, the Bronx, New York. I was working with my Co-Editor, Dr. Marcia Posner, but when I spoke with her on April 27, 2014, she did not want to take credit for having snapped the photo; perhaps it was my husband, Gerard. Marcia recalls the chocolate donuts that I served at our editing sessions. As Marcia and I worked, Kira was in her infant seat, observing with great interest.



Figure 1. Bella Hass Weinberg with her baby daughter, Kira Zahava, at an editing session of *Judaica Librarianship* with Co-Editor Dr. Marcia Posner in 1986

In the fifth grade, Kira had to do a presentation on a process. She selected the topic “How to Produce a Journal.” I gave her copies of all the forms used for *Judaica Librarianship*, and she explained the stages of journal production—from manuscript submission to printing—to her classmates at the Beth Jacob–Beth Miriam School. I’m confident that Kira wasn’t nervous while doing the presentation—she had drunk in this process with mother’s milk!

TIMELINESS

To prepare for this essay, I reviewed all the editorials in the issues of *Judaica Librarianship* published to date. A recurring theme in these editorials is that production of each issue took longer than expected. Such an apologia occurs in my first editorial (Weinberg 1983):

“This being a Jewish publication, it is appearing somewhat later than originally planned.” At the Harvard Conference on *Judaica Librarianship: Facing the Future*, held in 1988, Elhanan Adler, alluding to a forthcoming paper, said, “The next issue of *Judaica Librarianship* will appear whenever Bella gets it out!” (cited in Weinberg 1998, xii).

Volume 14 of *Judaica Librarianship* was designated its “25th Anniversary Issue,” creating a cute anachronism in light of the imminent publication of volume 18. In his charming writing style, Zachary observed in his editorial for volume 14, “It has been precisely twenty-five years since Volume 1, Number 1 of *Judaica Librarianship* first hit the newsstands in the autumn of 1983” (Baker 2008, vii). Zachary’s last editorial also discussed the delay in appearance of the journal: “Volume 16/17 is a double issue. . . . It took longer than usual. . . . I hope . . . this issue has been well worth the wait” (Baker 2011, v).

In an earlier editorial (Weinberg 1991), I wrote: “If it has taken a little more than five years to produce five volumes, that is because of the numerous stages involved. . . .” And even though production of an online journal entails fewer stages (I believe) than does production of a hard-copy journal, you wrote (in an email dated March 28): “I was hoping to have vol. 18 out before Pesach, but I’m afraid that won’t happen.” You gave me a final deadline for submission of this essay—the last week of April—and then offered me an extension!

REFEREEING

In volume 13, Zachary stated, “*JL* is AJL’s peer-reviewed journal” (Baker 2007, v), reiterating a policy that has been in place since the first issue. When I checked the guidelines for the online journal (<http://ajlpublishing.org/jl/about.html>), I was pleased to note that *Judaica Librarianship* will continue to be refereed, as this will ensure its quality. In my editorial for volume 9, citing a 1982 paper that proposed electronic journals, I wrote: “Considerable thought was given then, as it is now, to replicating the quality-control features of paper journals in the electronic medium” (Weinberg 1995, 3). Refereeing clearly adds to the time required to produce a journal, whether it is printed or online.

Since you invited me to illustrate my essay with a typed document, I was lucky to find a refereeing form from 1988. (There was water backup in my basement from Hurricane Irene, and many of my files had to be discarded.)

JUDAICA LIBRARIANSHIP

Editor:
 BELLA BEAS WEINBERG, D.L.S.
 Associate Professor
 Division of Library
 and Information Science
 St. John's University
 Ground Central & Utisco Plazas
 Jamaica, NY 11439
 (718) 990-6200
 Consulting Librarian
 WJC Institute for Jewish Research
 1028 8th Avenue
 New York, NY 10028
 (212) 553-0700 x46

Co-Editor:
 MARCIA W. FOSNER, Ph.D.
 JUDAICA LIBRARY CONSULTANT
 19 BROOKFIELD ROAD
 NEW HAVEN, CT 06520
 (203) 837-9383
 Librarian of Jewish Philanthropies
 of New York
 (212) 836-1506
 Jewish Book Council
 (212) 552-4547 x297

Associate Editors:
PEARL BERGER
 Yeshiva University Libraries
 500 West 165th Street
 New York, NY 10033
HAZEL KAPF
 Hebrew Academy of Atlanta Library
 1892 N. Druid Hills Rd., NE
 Atlanta, Georgia 30319
LINDA F. LEHMAN
 Yale University Library
 PO Box 1020A, Yale Station
 New Haven, CT 06520
EDITH LUBETSKY
 Stern College Library
 245 Levington Avenue
 New York, NY 10013

Subscriptions/Membership:
 DAVID J. GILNER, A.L.S. VP Membership
 Hebrew Union College Library
 3101 Canton Avenue
 Cincinnati, Ohio 45220
 (513) 221-1875

Back Issues and Reprints:
 BELLEVILLE BRONKHORST, Ph.D. A.L.S. VP Publications
 2000 South Green Road
 University Heights, OH 44121

Advertising Manager:
 SARAH LEVY
 42 Wilson Street
 Morristown, NJ 07952
 (973) 356-1602

Referee's Evaluation Form

Referee's Name _____ Date sent Aug 4, 1988
 Author's Name Weinberg Deadline for
 Return Aug 19, 1988
 Title LC's Hebraica Cataloging Manual

Recommendation

1. Accept as is See my comments
 2. Accept - needs editing*
 3. Return to author for revision, then reconsider*
 4. Reject*

*Comments on choices 2-4:

Indicate nature of editorial changes required, types of
 revisions to be requested of the author, or reasons for
 rejection. If rejection is recommended, indicate another
 journal for which the paper might be appropriate.

Edited manuscript enclosed?
 Yes No

Signature Pearl Berger Date 9/1/88

Please return to:
 Bella Beas Weinberg
 1141 Pelham Parkway North
 Bronx, NY 10469

Thank you.

AJL
 A publication of the Association of Jewish Libraries
 c/o National Foundation for Jewish Culture
 330 Seventh Avenue, 21st Floor
 New York, New York 10001

ed. 4/88

Figure 2. Original refereeing form used for *Judaica Librarian-ship*. Reprinted by permission of Pearl Berger

I was happy to note that many of the format guidelines for manuscripts submitted to the online journal are derived from those developed for the printed journal.

TECHNOLOGY

My first editorial (Weinberg 1983) provided the rationale for the journal. In his initial editorial, Zachary quoted my reasons and added one more: “the constantly changing technological environment in which libraries and librarians operate” (Baker 2007, v). Technology has figured prominently in *Judaica Librarianship*, beginning with the cover story of the first issue (Gilner et al. 1983), which Zachary cited.

Your invitation (emailed March 28) to write for volume 18 had a technological rationale: “Would you be interested in contributing an essay to the new issue upon embarking the online domain?” I had previously written (on March 26): “As the founding editor of *Judaica Librarianship*, I was upset when I heard that the journal would no longer appear in hard copy, but I’m happy about the open access.” The latter policy will surely bring the contents of the journal to a wider audience. In an email dated March 25, you provided statistical evidence for this: “So far we have vol. 16/17 online, with over 2,700 full-text downloads since last August.”

HISTORY

My inaugural editorial (Weinberg 1983) stated, “Whereas in the past, Judaica librarians tended to be rabbis or scholars knowledgeable in the contents of Jewish sacred books and/or the history of Jewish printing, today, those entering the field are usually graduates of library schools or of informal courses on Judaica librarianship. . . .” Assessing this statement today, I observe that some institutions still appoint scholars to be the heads of their libraries, while graduates of library schools actually run the libraries.

I have been privileged to teach Hebraica and Judaica cataloging to some librarians who are “knowledgeable in the contents of Jewish sacred books.” These students now hold major positions in Judaica libraries and often assist me in my current historical research (on the history of Hebrew indexes).

Judaica Librarianship was never designed to provide up-to-the-minute news, but it facilitates writing the history of our field by answering such questions as: When did the Library of Congress change a cataloging policy that affects Judaica libraries? When were computers with Hebrew script capability first used in libraries? and When were awards for bodies of work by authors of Jewish children’s literature given by the Association of Jewish Libraries?

IMPACT

The impact of the journal is evident from citations to it in basic texts for the field. As I wrote in the Foreword to Lazinger and Adler’s (1998) book on Hebrew cataloging, “As the Editor of *Judaica Librarianship*, I am proud of the many authors whose papers are cited in this work” (Weinberg 1998, xii). Multiple editions of Cutter and Oppenheim’s *Judaica Reference Sources* (3rd ed., 2004) acknowledged *Judaica Librarianship* for permission granted to reprint the carefully edited descriptions of reference books from their column in the journal. While that column no longer appears in *Judaica Librarianship*, Zachary’s editorial for volume 15 has a section entitled “New Reference Sources,” highlighting reviews that appear in that volume (Baker 2009, vi).

In a piece entitled “Bringing Judaica Librarianship to Israel,” I wrote, “The thesis of this editorial is that the Association of Jewish Libraries, through the publication of this journal and the key role that AJL members played in the organization of the international conference [First International Conference of Judaica and Israeli Librarians, held in Jerusalem in July 1990], has contributed to an awareness in Israel of Judaica librarianship as a distinct specialty” (Weinberg 1992).

In an editorial for volume 8, I stated: “. . . the greatest impact of *Judaica Librarianship* . . . resides in the pride that authors have in being published in *JL* and in the enhanced image of their profession which so many readers report the journal gives them, in addition to practical guidance in their work” (Weinberg 1994, 4).

Fan mail from readers also provides evidence of the journal's impact. Frequent contributors of letters include Arthur Kurzweil, who was Vice-President of Jason Aronson, Inc., Publishers, at the time he wrote, "I am, once again, overwhelmed by the high quality and fascinating material in the current issue [volume 9] . . ." (Commentaries 2000). Another frequent contributor of fan mail was the late Sol Steinmetz, former Editorial Director, Random House Reference & Information Publishing. Besides letters from these two notables, volume 10 includes commentaries from three AJL Presidents: Esther Nussbaum, Philip E. Miller, and Margot S. Berman.

My vision for the journal was not described in the first issue, but rather in volume 5 (Weinberg 1991), in which I noted, "It has been a thrill to see my vision become a reality." I conclude this essay with the wish expressed in that editorial: "May the Association of Jewish Libraries and its journal continue to flourish."

SOURCES

Baker, Zachary M. 2006. "Editor's note." *Judaica Librarianship* 12: v–viii.

———. 2007. "Editor's note." *Judaica Librarianship* 13: iv–v.

———. 2008. "Editor's note." *Judaica Librarianship* 14: v–vii.

———. 2009. "Editor's note." *Judaica Librarianship* 15: v–vi.

———. 2011. "Editor's note." *Judaica Librarianship* 16/17: v–vii.

"Commentaries." 2000. *Judaica Librarianship* 10 (1–2): 5.

Cutter, Charles. 2004. *Judaica Reference Sources: A Selective Annotated Bibliographic Guide* (3rd rev. and expanded ed.). Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited.

Gilner, David, Ellen Siegel Kovacic, and Herbert C. Zafren. 1983. "ALEF BIT: Hebrew Cataloging at Hebrew Union College on an Apple 11+." *Judaica Librarianship* 1 (1): 4–8.

Lazinger, Susan S. and Elhanan Adler. 1998. *Cataloging Hebrew Materials in the Online Environment: A Comparative Study of American and Israeli Approaches*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

Weinberg, Bella Hass. 1983. "IN THE BEGINNING . . ." *Judaica Librarianship* 1 (1): 3.

———. 1991. "IN THE BEGINNING: On the Founding of *Judaica Librarianship*." *Judaica Librarianship* 5 (2): 107.

- . 1992. “IN THE BEGINNING: Bringing Judaica Librarianship to Israel.” *Judaica Librarianship* 6 (1–2): 3.
- . 1994. “IN THE BEGINNING: *Judaica Librarianship* in the Literature: Assessing the Impact of Our Journal.” *Judaica Librarianship* 8 (1–2): 3–4.
- . 1995. “IN THE BEGINNING: *Judaica Librarianship* in the Age of the Internet.” *Judaica Librarianship* 9 (1–2): 3–5.
- . 1998. “Foreword.” In *Cataloging Hebrew Materials in the Online Environment: A Comparative Study of American and Israeli Approaches.*, edited by Susan S. Lazinger and Elhanan Adler, xi–xiii. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.