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# A Jewish National Collection for a Jewish National Library: The Abraham Schwadron Collection, Past and Present

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# A Jewish National Collection for a Jewish National Library: The Abraham Schwadron Collection, Past and Present

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

*In the same way that any person, who is not unfamiliar with the feeling of admiration, will be happy knowing that the picture and handwriting of a dear and important person will be kept and preserved, so it is important and pleasant for any man who respects the great of his people with a cherished intimacy, to acquaint himself with their faces and their handwriting—the most intimate and personal legacy of these great people—and to know that they are being kept and preserved for posterity and future generations...*<sup>2</sup>

Abraham Schwadron, introduction to *Catalogue of the Exhibition of Selected Examples from Dr. Abraham Schwadron's Autograph and Portrait Collection of Famous Jews* (Bet ha-sefarim ha-le'umi v'eha-universita'i bi-Yerushalayim 1927)

Abraham Schwadron (1878–1957) devoted his life to his collection of autographs and portraits, which he began amassing toward the end of the nineteenth century and donated in 1926 to the then newly-established Jewish National and University Library (JNUL). A talented and outspoken man in many fields,<sup>3</sup> Schwadron embodied in his collection a synthesis of his love for the Jewish people and its cultural history and, as this paper suggests, the spirit of his time as defined by Richard Cohen (2010): “a point in time when Jewish and non-Jewish individuals felt the need to present Jews and Judaism to the world in what had become accepted as cultural markers of acculturation and maturity.” One of Schwadron’s declared motivations for building his collection was a desire to reveal the genius of the Jewish people, personified in their most notable figures, and in light of Cohen’s ideas it is probably fair to say that Schwadron was inspired by this way of thinking.

Autograph collections were not a nineteenth century innovation. Cicero and Pliny the Elder reported on prized letters and manuscripts that they had collected and there was a revival of philography in Europe as early as the seventeenth century (Bourne 1918, 62–63; see Raab 2011 for a concise summary of autograph collecting). Well-known nineteenth-century Jews, including Stefan Zweig, Adolph Crémieux, and Ludwig Darmstatter of Berlin, collected autographs, and auto-

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Sixteenth World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The author provided all translations of Hebrew texts in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> The topics that Schwadron wrote about included the importance and centrality of the Hebrew language for the Jews; Hebrew revival; Jewish labor (Sharon 1953); Arab nationalism, and the principle of one land for one people (Sharon [Schwadron] 1949c).

graphs of Jews are represented in many autograph collections.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, Abraham Schwadron's collection was the first systematic and comprehensive autograph collection of prominent people of Jewish descent, chiefly men from Europe, for historical reasons discussed below. It is not in false modesty that Schwadron referred to his collection as unique and the first of its kind in articles he wrote and in the questionnaire that he completed for Tidhar's book *Encyclopedia of the Founders and Builders of Israel* (Schwadron 1934; Sharon [Schwadron] 1949b, 1954; David Tidhar Archive, NLI [hereafter cited as Tidhar Arc.], ARC. 4\* 1489, questionnaire 12/577).

Schwadron (Figure 1) was an idealist and a nationalist, who refused to compromise his radical political views. He advocated an “integral and cruel” form of Zionism, which called for an end to the Diaspora and the emigration of the Jewish people to Erets-Israel (Ungerfeld 1967; Yagar 1983, 18–34). In many ways, he shared the Jewish-nationalist philosophy of publicist Jacob Klatzkin (1882–1948), which directly opposed Aḥad Ha'am's cultural Zionism. In this context, it may be more than symbolic that Schwadron collected autographs of the best of Diaspora Jewry and took them to Erets-Israel for posterity. In December 1933, seven years after he had emigrated to Erets-Israel, Schwadron Hebraized his name to Sharon (Certificate of Change of Name, number S/28478, Abraham Schwadron Archive, NLI [hereafter cited as Schwad. Arc.], ARC. 4\* 1215 3 11), but the collection maintains his original name, as it was established in the name of his parents.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 1. Left to right: Abraham Schwadron (1878–1957) in his early thirties (1908 or 1909) and late fifties (1936), Schwad. Arc., ARC 4\* 1215 3 11.4

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Schwadron was a modest, frugal, and highly-principled man, and he demanded the same high standards and exacting behavior from others. He contributed regularly to *Davar*, the socialist daily associated with the Labor Party, although he was respected across the political spectrum. He believed in the national good and it was for this reason that he donated his collection to the

<sup>4</sup> Stefan Zweig's autograph collection consisted of historical, literary, and musical autographs. Part of his collection was donated to the British Library in 1986 by the Trustees of the Stefan Zweig Collection (see finding aid to Stefan Zweig Collection: Music, literary and historical manuscripts, Zweig MS 1-215, at [viewer.bl.uk/lamsHViewer/FindingAidHandler.aspx?recordid=032-001945746](http://viewer.bl.uk/lamsHViewer/FindingAidHandler.aspx?recordid=032-001945746)); another part was deposited in the JNUL in 1962 as a section of Zweig's personal archive (Stefan Zweig Collection, ARC. Ms. Var. 305 2 9, 93–130); and a third part is in the Leo Baeck Institute Archives (AR 834). His autograph of Albert Einstein is in the Sarah Stone Autograph Collection at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (MSS41590).

<sup>5</sup> Schwadron published under different names; for the sake of simplicity, his cited publication are grouped separately under [Abraham Schwadron's Publications](#) in the Sources section of this paper.

Jewish people rather than sell it.<sup>6</sup>

In stark contrast to his unbending political persona as a nationalist hawk, Schwadron was a gentle, learned man and it was his depth and breadth of knowledge that enabled him to undertake building such an ambitious, national collection. Schwadron was born in the village of Bieniów, near Zloczow, in eastern Galicia. His father was a well-to-do producer of spirits and his uncle was Rabbi Shalom Mordechai Hacoen Schwadron from Berezhany, one of the outstanding Torah scholars of his time. Considered a child prodigy, Schwadron attended the Jewish Gymnasium in Suceava and was tutored in *halakhah* (Jewish law) by his uncle.<sup>7</sup> Schwadron studied physics, philosophy, and chemistry at the University of Vienna, and received his doctorate in chemistry in 1911 (see Schwadron 1911 for a digitized copy of his dissertation). In Erets-Israel, he studied music and his composition for nine poems of poetess Rachel Bluwstein was performed at public concerts.<sup>8</sup>

Schwadron's extensive knowledge of Jewish sources was matched by his enthusiasm and love of Hebrew literature and Jewish history, which he acquired well before he emigrated to Erets-Israel. In Zloczow, he co-founded the Zionist Association with his father when he was only thirteen, and in Vienna he was a member of ha-Teḥiyah, an association of Jewish students who conversed among themselves only in Hebrew. His relationship with Dov Stock, later Professor Dov Sadan, who studied Hebrew and Yiddish literature, began in the 1920s when both men were still living in Galicia. Letters on Hebrew literature, philosophy, and other subjects in Schwadron's file in Sadan's archive at the National Library of Israel (NLI) affirm their close relationship and mutual respect (ARC. 4\* 1072 01 4636). Another prominent man of letters with whom Schwadron had a special relationship was Nobel Prize-winner Shmuel Yosef Agnon (see correspondence in Agnon's archive at NLI, ARC. 4\* 1270 4:540; and Agnon's file in the Schwadron Autograph Collection [hereafter cited as Schwad. Aut. Coll.] 01 16 03).<sup>9</sup> Schwadron sent Agnon his published newspaper articles with handwritten comments in the margins. Agnon responded and sent Schwadron original manuscripts of some of his works for the autograph collection. When *Haaretz* newspaper refused to publish Schwadron's response to an article published by Moshe Smilansky, Agnon tried to intervene on Schwadron's behalf, albeit unsuccessfully (Sharon 1950). Schwadron used to ask both Sadan and Agnon to help him acquire new items for his collection, probably on account of their mutual descent from Galicia, which had brought them together in the first place.

<sup>6</sup> According to Ben Gavriel (1928), Schwadron refused offers from American parties and brought the collection, then worth five thousand pounds or 100,000 marks, to Jerusalem.

<sup>7</sup> Shalom Mordechai Schwadron (Maharsham) authored two books, *Shelos u-teshuvos Maharsham* and *Daas Torah*. For more information on Schwadron's uncle, see Kimelman 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Posters advertising these concert are in the Schwadron Archive (ARC. 4\* 1215 4 20.1): Jewish Composers, concert at the Edison Cinema in Jerusalem, 14.11.1935; Grand Popular Concert, in the Evelina de Rothschild School Hall, 7.12.1935; and Koncert Dra. A. Schwadrona broadcast on Radio Palestine on 2 Iutego 1937.

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, there is no Agnon file in the Schwadron Archive, only in the autograph collection. This is an example of the fine line between letters that are part of the Schwadron Archive or his collection and his organizational choices; see more below.

In 1935, Schwadron married Dina Freidenberg. The couple lived in Jerusalem until 1948, when terrified by the siege of the city they decided that Dina should take their only son, Yitzhak, and move to America. Initially, Dina Schwadron had planned to stay in the United States for a period of three months, but she remained there while the couple's son attended high school and later went on to pursue a degree at an American university. For ideological reasons, Schwadron never left Israel after making *aliyah* and, because of financial constraints, never saw his wife and son again.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, Schwadron corresponded extensively with Yitzhak and Dina over the years and in September 2012 Schwadron's granddaughter Dina visited the NLI during her tour in Israel with the *Taglit* program.

Schwadron was hit by a car in September 1957 and died in a Jerusalem hospital on October 17, 1957, at age seventy-nine. Mordechai Nadav, director of JNUL's Manuscripts and Archives Department, wrote the official obituary (Nadav 1957); many other obituaries appeared in Israeli dailies.<sup>11</sup> It was his old friend and colleague Dov Sadan who was asked to write Schwadron's eulogy, which appeared in the official notification of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Sadan 1957).

What follows is a history of the Schwadron Collection from its inception to the present day and a chronicle of the thorny relationship between the controversial collector-curator-donor Schwadron and the Hebrew University. Examples will illustrate the wealth of resources that the collection holds for research. The concluding section will report on NLI's project to make the collection discoverable through its online catalog.

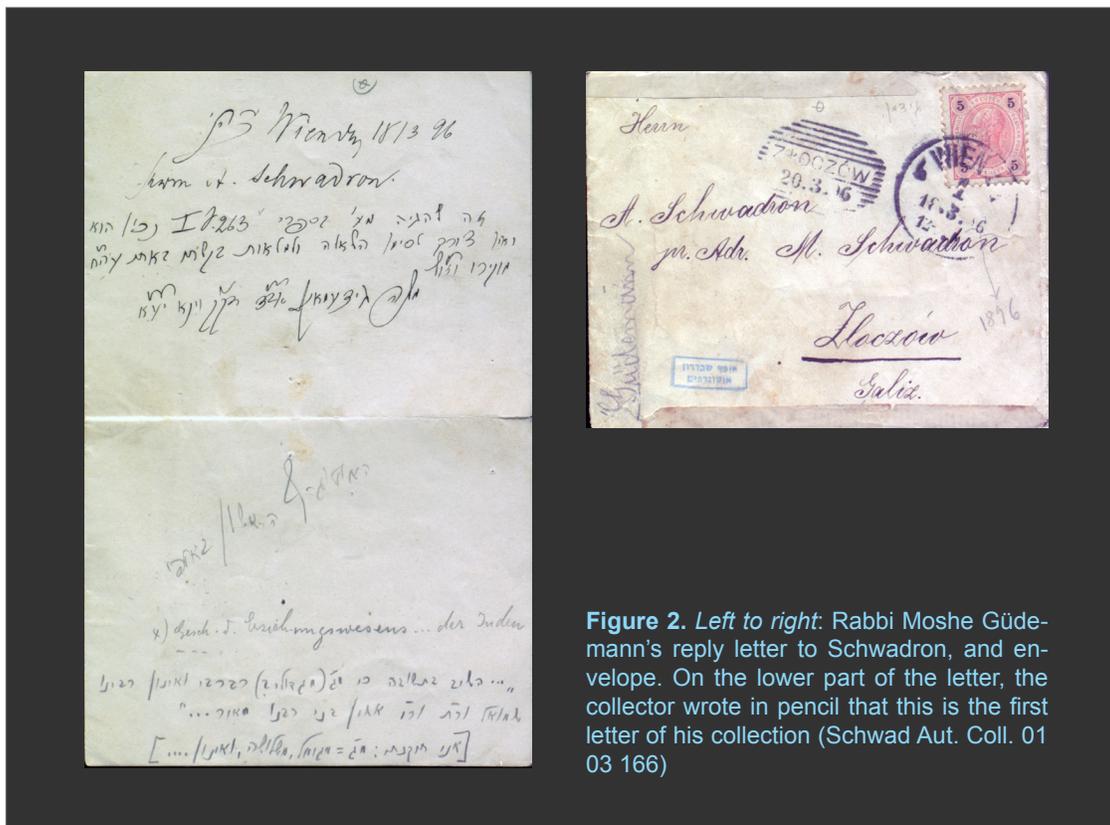
## “THE PICTURE AND HANDWRITING OF DEAR AND IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS”: THE SCHWADRON COLLECTION DURING HIS LIFETIME

In every article and interview about his collection, Schwadron recounted that he had established it in 1896, when he was sixteen years old. Yet according to Yagar (1983) and the biographical details that Schwadron himself submitted to the University of Vienna (Schwadron 1911), he was born in 1878, which would make him eighteen in 1896. The original questionnaire completed by Schwadron for David Tidhar's Encyclopedia (Tidhar Arc. , ARC. 4\* 1489, questionnaire 12/577) gives his year of birth as “uncertain.” In his encyclopedia, Tidhar (1956) cites Schwadron's Jewish birth year as 5643 (1883). Whatever his exact age when he established his collection, Schwadron was in his teens. He considered the collection to have started with his receipt of a letter from the chief rabbi of Vienna, Rabbi Moshe Güdemann. (The letter is postmarked 1896.) Schwadron had managed to decipher a document in Güdemann's book that had puzzled the rabbi, and Schwadron sent his interpretation to Vienna. To his great surprise, he received a letter

<sup>10</sup> Prof. Yitzhak Sharon returned to Israel in July 2015, for the first time since 1948. Sharon and his wife Sandy visited their daughter Dina, then a Fulbright chemistry student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. On both occasions, the NLI arranged a special display from the Schwadron Collection.

<sup>11</sup> Obituaries were published in *Davar* (“Dr. A. Sharon [Schwadron] enenu” 1957); *Herut* (“Dr. A. Sharon z”l” 1957; “Dr. Sharon li-menuhot” 1957); *Ma'ariv* (Sh. R.1957; Y. N. 1957); and *ha-Tsofeh* (“Met Avraham Sharon” 1957; “Prof. Sharon li-Menuhot” 1957).

back (Figure 2), and this exchange prompted him to write to other prominent Jews for samples of their handwriting. Two or three years later Schwadron first encountered the term “autograph,” after reading about the national autograph collections in the British Museum and the Louvre, and seeing the autograph and portrait collection of famous Poles at the National Ossoliński Institute in Lvov. It was then that Schwadron decided that he would take it upon himself to create a national autograph and portrait collection for the Jewish people and he continued collecting by corresponding with well-known personalities and by traveling across Europe in search of autographs. Schwadron subsequently wrote the autograph entry for *ha-Entsiklopedyah ha-Ivrit* (The Hebrew Encyclopedia; Sharon 1949a) and *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Schw[adron] 1971).



**Figure 2.** Left to right: Rabbi Moshe Güdemann's reply letter to Schwadron, and envelope. On the lower part of the letter, the collector wrote in pencil that this is the first letter of his collection (Schwad Aut. Coll. 01 03 166)

By 1900, Schwadron owned approximately two hundred autographs but disaster struck and a fire in his parents' house destroyed most of his collection, which was kept in the attic. Undeterred, Schwadron restarted his collection and thanks to his foresight it was saved from a second disaster in 1914, when he gave it to his sister as she fled to Vienna, three days before Russian troops invaded his village. In 1926, Schwadron took his collection to Palestine and in an agreement dated Tevet 21 5687 (December 26, 1926), he donated it to the Hebrew University's Jewish National and University Library (Schwadron's personal file, 042, Hebrew University Archive, Mount Scopus; hereafter cited as Schwad. pers. file HUJ). It seems that his intention to donate the collection to a national institution in Jerusalem took root early on, as he had published an appeal for autographs for his collection in the London newspaper *Jewish Chronicle* in 1920, writing: “I am desirous of adding to this number [of autographs], and intend to present the whole collection to the Jewish

National Museum in Jerusalem” (Schwadron 1920). In compliance with the agreement, Schwadron prepared an exhibition based on the collection. It opened in April 1927 during the Passover holiday and, due to its success, the closing date was postponed to May 6 (NLI Arc., ARC. 4\* 793/207 *gimel*; Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Poster announcing the extension of the autograph and portrait exhibition until May 6, 1927 (NLI Arc., ARC. 4\* 793/207 *gimel*)

A less fortunate repercussion of the 1927 exhibition was the renewal of the contemporary ultra-Orthodox community boycott of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (for a copy of the *pashkevil* [broadside posted publicly], see Baras 1992, 17, Hebrew side). Circumstances surrounding the exhibition were not promising: It was housed in the library building, then located on ha-Ḥabashim Street, which bordered the ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods. The opening was scheduled for the intermediate days of Passover, when religious Jews tend to stay at home and look for activities for the whole family. The ultra-Orthodox leadership had already expressed its concerns in 1875 regarding the non-religious “national” library by calling for a boycott (cited in Baras 1982): the 1875 *pashkevil*, published by the religious leadership of the old *yishuv* (Jewish settlement in Palestine), was revised and reposted in an expanded version in 1904, calling for the boycott of the library because among the sacred books it housed were works composed by “heretics, apostates, Karaites, agitators, missionaries...” Among the signatories were Chief Rabbi Avraham Ashkenzi, Rabbi Meir Auerbach, and Rabbi Shmuel Salant. The 1927 version, signed by Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld and Rabbi Eliyahu Klatzkin, reminded their communities that visiting the library was forbidden and that the announcements posted around town about autographs in the library should not prompt them to end the boycott. In contrast, it is interesting to note that in 1955, an exhibition of autographs “of the great men of the Jewish people” hosted by the Hebrew University was advertised in *ha-Kol* newspaper, which is published by the ultra-Orthodox movement Agudat Yiśra’el. The autographs were from the Schwadron Collection and were to be exhibited in the Eitingon Library, one of the JNUL’s branches in Jerusalem situated at 14 Balfour Street (Schwad. Arc., box AC-3823).

Schwadron had amassed his collection for over thirty years before he moved to Palestine and from the outset, with his limited budget, he used letter writing as the main channel for acquiring autographs. According to Schwadron (1949b), he sent 65,000 letters to leading Jewish personalities. The difficulty he encountered in acquiring autographs in Western Europe was partly due to a lack of cooperation of the people involved, especially among leading Zionists. Schwadron attributed the even greater difficulty of obtaining autographs from Eastern Europe to the unstable conditions there caused by war, pogroms, migration, and poverty—circumstances that also lessened the chances for the documents’ survival. The custom of burying manuscripts and letters together with great rabbis, or burying such documents once they became worn or torn from overuse (*genizah*), also reduced the number of available documents. In order to locate and acquire the autographs Schwadron desired to collect in Eastern Europe, he often had to travel in the region himself.

Schwadron was tenacious and resourceful in his efforts. In 1947, he wrote his second letter of a series of four to Nobel Prize winner Otto Stern: “I am confident that you will be lenient toward an old collector’s insistence. I have devoted fifty-one years and more to accumulating the autographs and portraits and I have set my heart on having famous persons represented in my collection...” (Schwad. Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215, unsorted correspondence).<sup>12</sup>

Another example of Schwadron’s relentless determination can be seen in his correspondence with Albert Einstein. In August 1929, Einstein wrote to Schwadron that if he had been a library director, he would not have undertaken such a collection [presumably of autographs and portraits] but would have concentrated on collecting “worthy” publications! (original letter in German; ARC. 4\* 1215 6 78.1). That sentiment did not deter Einstein from agreeing to donate the manuscript of his *Theory of Relativity* to the collection or stop Schwadron from writing the following letter to Einstein in January 1947: “Dear Prof. Einstein, have you by any chance the mss [manuscript] of “An Elementary Derivation of the Equivalence of Mass and Energy,” published in the Technion Year Book of 1946? We should very much like to add it to your “Allgemeine Relativitaetstheorie” which you were kind enough to donate to our collection at the time. With many thanks in advance...” (Albert Einstein Arc., 37–285). And the manuscript duly arrived!

As letters in the collection and in Schwadron’s personal archive show, he developed a wide network of contacts who provided him with autographs. He corresponded with other autograph collectors, sending them lists of his desiderata and offering autograph exchanges. The Waller’s Manuscript Collection in Uppsala University, Sweden, contains such letters that Schwadron sent to Erik Waller between the years 1924 and 1932, including a typed copy of a *New York Times* story about “Dr. Schwadron’s Gift to Hebrew University” (Rosenbach 1932) with Schwadron’s handwritten comments.<sup>13</sup>

Schwadron continued to work diligently on the development of his collection once it was housed in the JNUL and he was recognized as both the founder and director of the collection.<sup>14</sup> He encouraged community members to donate autographs to expand his collection, which by 1926 encompassed about 2,700 autographs, according to unsigned articles in dailies (Matnat osef oṭografim u-temunot be-vet ha-sefer ha-le’umi vеха-mikhlali 1927; Matnat osef oṭografim u-temunot 1927). An appeal on behalf of the JNUL was published on the cover of the 1927 exhibition catalogue, calling on friends and visitors to assist with building the collection (Bet ha-sefarim

<sup>12</sup> In his first letter to Stern (March 25, 1947), Schwadron started off by writing, “To our great regret, we have found that your name is not yet represented in our section of ‘Nobel Prize Winners’” and asked for “a hand-written paper of yours ... signed by yourself.” In his second letter (September 11, 1947), Schwadron thanked Stern warmly for his letter, but asked for a manuscript or notes he may have jotted down. In his third letter (July 7, 1950), Schwadron repeated his request from the second letter, and in the final letter (October 17, 1950) he thanks Stern for “a proof and reprint of your article.”

<sup>13</sup> Schwadron’s letter, sent from Zloczow on September 7, 1924, offered Waller a number of autographs in exchange for his desiderata list (Waller Ms Wal-01255). The letters are available at <http://waller.ub.uu.se/44559.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Dr. C. Wormann, chief librarian of the JNUL, January 28, 1949. Schwad. Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215 6 47.2.

ha-le'umi ve'ha-universita'i bi-Yerushalayim 1927). Schwadron's outreach efforts included articles in many languages, disseminated in many countries; targeted donation requests in the form of newspaper advertisements (an ad in *Davar* called for contributions of original autographs of specific members of the Bilu (Palestine Pioneers) movement; Schwadron 1933); public lectures around the country; and radio interviews. Indeed, journalist Shimon Samett (1945) claimed that every educated person in the *yishuv* had heard of Schwadron and his collection, while Schwadron is quoted in an article in *ha-Dor* as saying that the collection is not paid enough notice by Jews abroad (ha-Yerushalmi 1952). This seems to be a departure from earlier years, when an article in *The Palestine Bulletin* (Dr. Schwadron's Unique Autograph Collection 1927) stated that "Many articles on the collection appeared in the European Press." An article about the collection, written by A. S. Rosenbach, appeared in the prestigious *New York Times* (Rosenbach 1932)—the same article Schwadron had typed and sent to Dr. Waller at Uppsala University<sup>15</sup>—but these may have not satisfied Schwadron. Rosenbach's story was cited in a *Palestine Post* article marking the fortieth anniversary of Schwadron's collection (G.L. 1937):

Some years ago Dr. A.S. Rosenbach, the well-known Jewish bibliophile and President of the American Jewish Historical Society, published an article in the *New York Times* in which he drew attention to a department of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, whose existence few may have suspected: Dr. Abraham Schwadron's collection of autographs, manuscripts and portraits of notable Jewish men and women throughout the ages, which their collector presented to the Hebrew University in 1927, after having worked untiringly at his task for 30 years.

The collection was an autonomous unit within the JNUL and a separate department in the same name was established to house it, as was promised to Schwadron in the agreement with the Hebrew University's JNUL in 1926. The establishment of a new department for the Schwadron collection was highly irregular (Nadav 1984).<sup>16</sup> Before the establishment of the Department of Hebrew Manuscripts in 1956, the JNUL had general sections for Hebraica and Judaica and collections were assigned accordingly; manuscripts were registered in the register books and cataloged by the library deputy director, Dr. Issachar Joel, who also published descriptions for some of them. Between 1935 and 1948, Abraham Yaari, head of the Judaica Collection, was responsible for registering the manuscripts in an inventory book introduced by Gotthold Weil in 1935, when he became director of the JNUL.

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<sup>15</sup> Rosenbach himself was an avid collector of autographs and helped create collections for the Huntington and other great library collections.

<sup>16</sup> Another exception was the Gershom Scholem Collection, which also developed this way as a result of the agreement signed by Scholem, the Hebrew University, and JNUL on May 24, 1965. The collection was established in 1985 and opened to the public in 1987. The agreement included instructions for removing part of Scholem's library that was relevant to his scientific research and transferring it to the JNUL after his death. The agreement stated that this part of the library would "constitute a separate unit that may not be divided..." (Gershom Scholem Archive, NLI, ARC. 4\* 1599 02 22). To this day, the Scholem Collection has a dedicated library space in NLI, and its own collection curators and reading room.

When the Mount Scopus university campus was cut off from the rest of Jerusalem in 1948,<sup>17</sup> Schwadron had access to only about 250 of the more valuable documents (“Famous Collection Now in Arab Hands” 1955; Aḥiyosef 1958). His development work on the collection continued over the following nine years, until September 1957, when the Schwadron Collection was transferred to the Department of Manuscripts, at Schwadron’s own recommendation. Schwadron was to remain the collection curator but this plan ended abruptly with his death a month later.

After Schwadron’s death in September 1957, Dr. Mordechai Nadav, then a junior librarian, began working full-time in the Department of Manuscripts and on the Schwadron Collection. In August 1958, the Schwadron Collection was transported from Mount Scopus by military convoy to the Hebrew University branch at the Terra Sancta building, and integrated into the JNUL Department of Manuscripts. Public access continued to be available through Schwadron’s card catalog, enabling greater use of the collection for publications, research, and exhibitions.<sup>18</sup> By the following year, Nadav (1958)<sup>19</sup> apparently found himself overwhelmed with work, because in his report he recommended that another librarian be hired. Still, Nadav retained the title of curator of the collection (Fritz Albert Lipman file, Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 12 305) and he was to be the last departmental director, too. After Nadav’s departure, generations of student workers managed this and other collections in the JNUL Department of Manuscripts and cataloged the mass of items accrued during Schwadron’s time (Weiser 2017).

Following Schwadron’s death, the collection was continually processed and maintained. New items were acquired, but certainly not with the same level of dedication and single-mindedness that Schwadron had brought to the task. In 2008, the Department of Manuscripts was split and the Schwadron Collection was moved to the Archives Department, where it remains today. New acquisitions of autographs are processed by the archivists or curators in the department. Portraits are still collected, too, but are processed by the photography collection curator, who specializes in that format.

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<sup>17</sup> In late 1947, the library on Mount Scopus (the only campus of the Hebrew University at the time) moved some of its activities to the Yeshurun and Eitingon libraries in West Jerusalem due to hostilities. After access to Mount Scopus was cut off during the 1948 war, the library collections were dispersed among ten locations in West Jerusalem. In 1949, the library transferred its offices and main facilities to the Terra Sancta building, where it resided until 1960. This is where Schwadron himself was located from 1949 to 1957, after moving out from the Wolffsohn building on Mount Scopus in 1949. The library building in the Givat Ram campus was opened to the public in 1960.

<sup>18</sup> Regrettably, no complete list of exhibitions solely based on the Schwadron Collection is available, neither in Schwadron’s Archive nor in the Manuscripts and Archives Department’s records.

<sup>19</sup> Nadav’s 1958 survey included details on his work with the collection, his account of relocating most of the collection from Mount Scopus to the Terra Sancta branch of the Hebrew University, and his own thoughts on opening the collection to the public. Based on evidence in the Schwadron Archive and Schwadron’s writings and letters, especially his written guidelines for users of the archive, Schwadron wished to make his collection accessible to the public. His wish could not be fulfilled since most of the collection stayed behind, inaccessible on Mount Scopus until Nadav was able to open it up again in 1958.

## THE STRUCTURE AND ARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION

That Schwadron saw the autographs and portraits as one comprehensive collection is apparent from his title, “Collection of Dr. Abraham Schwadron,” on the original folder stamps of both the autographs and portraits and on his original typed catalog cards. Similarly, the JNUL letterhead stationery used by Schwadron reads, “Jewish National and University Library, Department of Autographs and Portraits—Collection of Dr. Abraham Schwadron”. Physically and conceptually, however, Schwadron subdivided the collection into two separate parts, based on format. There were and still are two card catalogs and some of the original cards in the portrait collection have cross-references to the autograph collection, for example on the card for Joseph Buloff (1899–1985) there is a note: “see his picture in the autograph section.”

A sample of letters from Schwadron’s correspondence with the Hebrew University (Schwad. Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215 6 43) shows the variety of names given to the collection—sometimes by the same department—depending on the context. The names range from “Autograph and Picture Collection” to “Autograph Collection” to “Collection of Jewish Autographs and Portraits” to “Schwadron Collection of Jewish Autographs.”<sup>20</sup> Yet most commonly, the collection was perceived as one entity under the title of Schwadron Collection, as demonstrated in many letters and in the official document that stated Schwadron’s credentials and authorized him to acquire material for the collection after it had moved to JNUL (Schwad. Arc., JNUL file).<sup>21</sup> The JNUL followed Schwadron’s lead and continued listing the collection as one entity in its catalog, even though there was always a separate card catalog for each part of the collection. This arrangement was maintained after the renaming of JNUL as the National Library of Israel in 2008 and the conversion of the card catalog to NLI’s online catalog in 2011.

The Schwadron Collection is not archival in nature, but because it is housed in NLI’s Archives Department, the collection is arranged hierarchically in NLI’s online catalog, in the same way as an archive (Schwadron’s personal archive is housed separately in the Archives Department.) The collection is divided into two sub-fonds: the autograph collection (Fonds 1) and the portrait collection (Fonds 2). Each sub-fonds is further divided into twenty-two series, which correspond

<sup>20</sup> “Autograph and Picture Collection” (Schwadron to the Hebrew University’s financial secretary’s office; December 2, 1940 and January 1, 1942), “Autograph Collection” (Schwadron to the Hebrew University’s financial secretary’s office; February 10, 1943), “Autograph Collection” (Schwadron to the general secretary of the Hebrew University regarding a donation of a letter written by Prof. Ehrenstein in 1927; November 19, 1941), “Collection of Jewish Autographs and Portraits” (Schwadron to the Hebrew University’s Organization and Information Department; May 22, 1946), “Your Collection” (Schwadron to the Hebrew University’s Organization and Information Department; April 12, 1950), and “Schwadron Collection of Jewish Autographs” (Schwadron to Hebrew University’s Organization and Information Department, thanking a donor; February 16, 1950). ARC. 4\* 1215 6 43.2.

<sup>21</sup> JNUL chief librarian Dr. Curt Worman signed two letters, in Hebrew and English, starting with “To whom it may concern.” The rest of the text differs in the two languages: In English, the letter reads, “This is to certify that Dr. Abraham Schwadron (Sharon), initiator and head of the Collection of Autographs and Portraits of the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem (Schwadron Collection)...” The text of the Hebrew letter reads, “I hereby give Dr. Avraham Schwadron (Sharon), founder and director of the Department of Autographs and Portraits of the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem (‘the Schwadron Collection’) power of attorney...” The letters are dated January 28, 1949 (ARC. 4\* 1215 6 47.2) and January 31, 1949 (ARC. 4\* 1215 6 47.2).

to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and are linked to the last names represented in the collection and to authority file names as much as possible.

Researchers using personal archives may appreciate the complementary role that the Schwadron Collection plays in biographical research. An interesting example is the case of Stefan Zweig. His archive at NLI contains letters written to him, but the Zweig file in the Schwadron collection contains letters written by Zweig (ARC. Ms. Var. 305, Stefan Zweig Collection; Stefan Zweig file, Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 18 12).

One of Schwadron's more unorthodox methods of autograph collecting was his dismantling of personal archives as they arrived at the library. For example, the collection is generously sprinkled with letters written by illustrious Jews to Salomon Buber (Martin Buber's grandfather), taken from his archive. This is evident from Schwadron's unabashed comment on these letters, "removed from Shlomo Buber's archive," indicating that Schwadron's desire to create his ultimate collection had taken precedence over adherence to basic archival principles. These letters are currently being processed and will be returned to the Salomon Buber archive at NLI. In May 2016, two other archives that had found their way into Schwadron's collection—the Rafael Patai Collection (new reference code: ARC. 4° 1983) and the Josef Israels Collection (new reference code: ARC. 4° 1984) deposited at the JNUL in 1937 and 1935—were restored to their independent status. Another unusual aspect of Schwadron's archival processing practices was the blurring of lines between his personal archive and his collection, but that subject is beyond the scope of this paper.

## STORMY RELATIONSHIP: SCHWADRON AND THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem was initially delighted to accept Schwadron's donated collection and announcements appeared in the national bibliography *Kiryat Sefer* immediately after the agreement was signed ("Matnat osef oṭografim u-temunot" 1927).<sup>22</sup> One of the newspaper stories describing the donation reported that Dr. Schwadron would compile a special card catalog for the collection and give a lecture the following Wednesday evening on the "creation, essence and direction of the collection that he has just donated" ("Matnat osef oṭografim u-temunot be-vet ha-sefer ha-le'umi yeha-mikhlali" 1927). Additions to the collection were regularly announced in *Kiryat Sefer* and the national press. The 1934 report of the Hebrew University's survey committee declared that, "The most remarkable special collection in this department (Hebraica and Judaica) is undoubtedly the autograph and portrait collection presented by Dr. A. Schwadron. It is no exaggeration to say that the visitor to the library will be impressed by nothing else so much as by this collection of Dr. Schwadron, who after a thirty-five-year labor of love has brought together over 3000 autographs and more than 2000 likenesses of famous Jewish personalities. The future historian of Jewish cultural life, no less than the historian of Jewish graphology, will find abundant material in this collection" (ha-Universiṭah ha-'Ivrit bi-Yerushalayim 1934, 63).

<sup>22</sup> For unknown reasons—possibly bureaucracy—the official acceptance letter of library director Hugo Berman is March 11, 1928 (Schwad. pers. file HUIJ).

In 1946, the Hebrew University published a booklet entitled *Collections of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem* about some of its most important collections. The booklet, which was dedicated to the Friends of the Hebrew University, listed six collections and museums; the one given the most coverage was the Schwadron Collection. In the second edition of the “National Libraries of the World: Their History, Administration and Public Services,” (Arundell and Hill 1957), the JNUL entry focused primarily on its book collection, but it contained a lengthy paragraph on the collection of Jewish autographs and portraits that had been built around the Schwadron Collection.

Nevertheless, the university underfunded the Schwadron Collection and—as described in the 1934 report produced by the Survey Committee that investigated the university standing and Dr. Magnes’s leadership (Kotzin 2010, 215–217)— provided a “ridiculously low sum [was] provided for its maintenance” (ha-Universiṭah ha-‘Ivrit bi-Yerushalayim 1934, 63). Moreover, the university did not recognize Schwadron as a university employee and did not pay him a realistic salary.<sup>23</sup> Not only did the university administration not dedicate a room to the collection, as guaranteed in the 1926 agreement, but it also housed the collection in “a small, cramped room within the spacious grand JNUL building” (Samett 1945), which was described in the 1934 report of the Survey Committee as “a room that is far from being fire-proof or sufficiently protected against theft” (ha-Universiṭah ha-‘Ivrit bi-Yerushalayim 1934, 63). On the same page of the report it was noted that, “It is very much to be regretted that the collection does not receive the attention it deserves from the administration.”

The agreement between Schwadron and the library (Schwad. pers. file HUU; Figure 4), dated 2 Tevet 5687 (December 26, 1926), was conditional. The last paragraph stated that if the Hebrew University did not agree to any of the restrictions stated above, the donation would be canceled, the collection would be returned to Schwadron, and he would reimburse the JNUL for any expenses incurred. It was JNUL

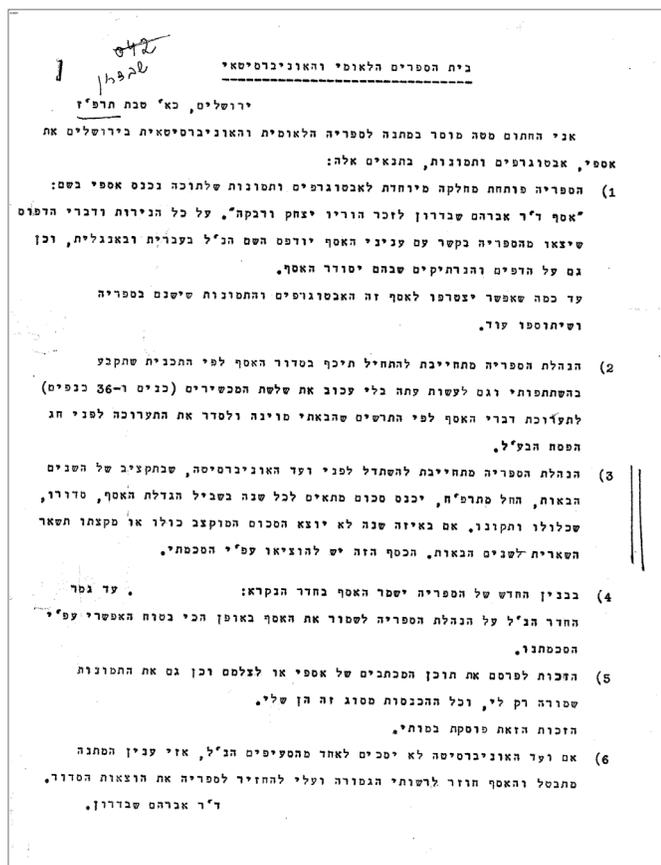


Figure 4. Schwadron-JNUL 1926 contract, first page (Schwad. pers. file HUU)

<sup>23</sup> Still, university administration pushed Schwadron to retire at the age of seventy, in accordance with university regulations; see a memo from Schwadron to the president of the Hebrew University, November 13, 1949 (Schwad. pers. file HUU, copy in Schwad. Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215/2).

director Dr. Hugo Bergman who wrote to Schwadron that the library would sign the contract (letter to Schwadron, March 11, 1928; Schwad. pers. file HUI).

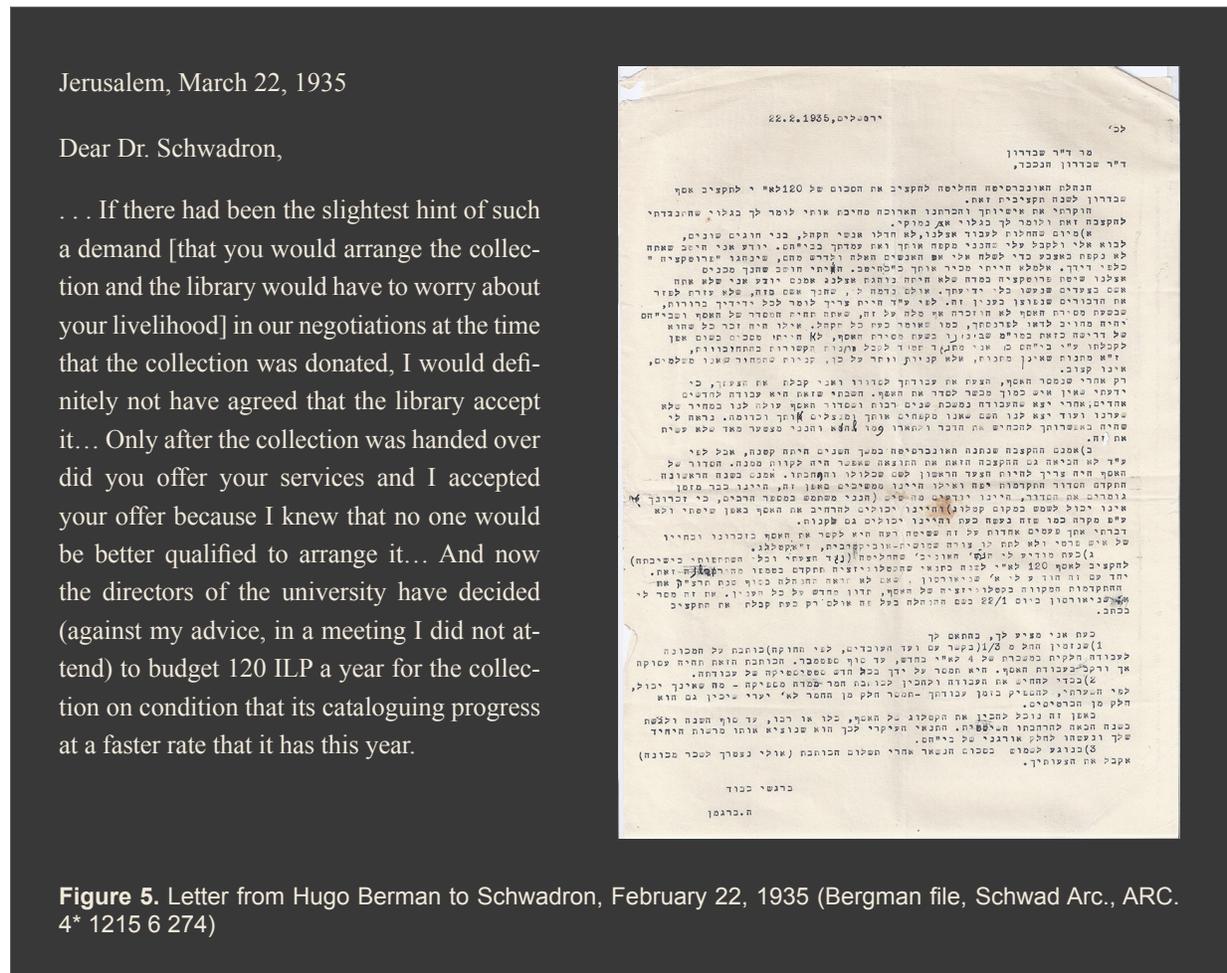
A closer examination of the 1926 agreement may clarify whether JNUL complied with its terms. The first paragraph required that the JNUL open a special department for autographs and portraits, where Schwadron's collection would be housed. The collection was to be called the Dr. Abraham Schwadron Collection in Memory of His Parents Yitzchak and Rivka and this name would appear on its files and formal stationery. This request was honored. According to Nadav (1958), the original department was closed at Schwadron's behest in September 1957. Schwadron also requested that to the extent possible, autographs and pictures already in the JNUL collections, and those acquired by the JNUL in the future, would be added to his collection, which remains the policy at NLI. This paragraph may have been Schwadron's justification for removing autographs from existing archives and adding them to his collection.

The second paragraph set out JNUL's commitment to begin to arrange the collection immediately, with Schwadron's participation, and to make preparations for an exhibition before Passover of that year, following plans he had created in Vienna. Schwadron continued his collecting under the auspices of the JNUL and the exhibition opened on schedule. The third paragraph committed the JNUL management to appeal to the Hebrew University to secure funds for the coming years, beginning in 5688 (1927), and to allocate a suitable annual budget for the growth of the collection, its processing, improvement, and maintenance. Unexpended funds were to be carried over to the following year and all expenditures required Schwadron's consent.

Schwadron had a running battle with the Hebrew University and the JNUL over the budget, which he claimed was never sufficient. He addressed his written protests to the financial department of the Hebrew University and the JNUL director. The correspondence between Bergman and Schwadron in Schwadron's archive is particularly acrimonious in tone. For example, when Bergman refused to give Schwadron the agreed increase in budget of ten Israeli lirot in 1933 (letter from Bergman to Schwadron, September 7, 1933, Bergman file, Schwad. Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215 6 274), Schwadron replied that he hoped he would not be forced to appeal using any "kosher" means available to him, even if it meant going to court or going public. A week later, Bergman replied that he was not willing to negotiate with Schwadron under such threats (letter to Schwadron, September 14, 1933; Bergman file, Schwad. Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215 6 274). The ongoing confrontations involved not only formal letters but also notes. One such note from Bergman in December 3, 1935 admonished Schwadron for going over his budget and spending funds without first securing permission (Bergman file, Schwad. Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215 6 274).

According to newspaper articles (Samett 1945; ha-Yerushalmi 1952), it was the Hebrew University administration that caused trouble for Schwadron by not fulfilling the agreement. Yet in a revealing series of letters between Schwadron and Bergman from 1935, when Bergman served as JNUL director (Bergman file, Schwad. Arc.), Schwadron found proof of what he had begun to suspect: that it was Bergman who had been blocking the budget for the collection, not the He-

brew University. In one of these letters, dated February 22, 1935 (Figure 5), Bergman disclosed that the Hebrew University granted him a budget of 120 Israeli lirot for the collection—against his initial recommendation and without having invited him to the budget meeting. Bergman added that while he cared for the collection and for Schwadron personally, he would not have accepted the donation—if it had been up to him—had he known that the JNUL would have to support Schwadron financially to maintain the collection. He had accepted Schwadron’s offer to process the collection because he knew that Schwadron was best suited for that role, but had thought that the work would be accomplished in a matter of months. Bergman mentioned the potential problems involved in leaving the collection in the hands of an individual who was not affiliated with the university or library, among them the leisurely pace of cataloging, and suggested transferring the processing responsibilities to Avraham Yaari. Finally, Bergman could not understand why Schwadron would insist on being paid a salary or employed by the university or why he would send people to complain about the situation, when such terms were not part of the agreement.<sup>24</sup> In three emotional letters sent in reply over the next few weeks, Schwadron addressed all the points



Jerusalem, March 22, 1935

Dear Dr. Schwadron,

... If there had been the slightest hint of such a demand [that you would arrange the collection and the library would have to worry about your livelihood] in our negotiations at the time that the collection was donated, I would definitely not have agreed that the library accept it... Only after the collection was handed over did you offer your services and I accepted your offer because I knew that no one would be better qualified to arrange it... And now the directors of the university have decided (against my advice, in a meeting I did not attend) to budget 120 ILP a year for the collection on condition that its cataloguing progress at a faster rate that it has this year.

Figure 5. Letter from Hugo Berman to Schwadron, February 22, 1935 (Bergman file, Schwad Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215 6 274)

<sup>24</sup> In the 1928 budget (Bergman Archive, NLI, ARC. 4\* 1502 04 109), there is no mention of Schwadron as a JNUL employee and his allocation is listed under a special budget for the Schwadron Collection (30 Israeli lirot). In the 1933/4 budget (Hebrew University–JNUL file, Schwad. Arc., ARC. 4\* 1215 6 47.2), his allocation was increased to 1,000 Israeli lirot.

raised by Bergman, asserting that he did not send people to complain but that they had interfered on their own behalf after checking the facts, and that he did not go to the press because that would be a lowly thing to do. Schwadron also suggested extending the employment of a Mr. Prins, who had already been working on the collection sporadically.

The disclosure that Bergman was the source of the opposition to funding the collection, rather than the Hebrew University as a whole, is consistent with the frequent reference to the collection as a shining example of the library's holdings. Furthermore it seems that Bergman's animosity may have been personal, because Schwadron's letters to the Hebrew University's financial department during the 1940s, sent after Bergman had completed his term as director of the JNUL in 1935, often succeeded in securing a larger budget.<sup>25</sup>

Lastly, the fourth paragraph of the agreement asserted that the new JNUL building (Wolffsohn House, opened in 1930) would house the Schwadron Collection in a dedicated, named space. Since that dedicated room within the new building was not ready at the time (1926), the JNUL management committed to keep the collection in the safest possible manner. In a booklet published on the occasion of the dedication of the JNUL's Wolffsohn House (April 15, 1930), the building was described in detail, including the reading and study rooms and other smaller rooms it contained, but no mention was made of a dedicated room for the Schwadron Collection, although the collection was described in three pages of the booklet (*The David Wolffsohn House of the Jewish National and University Library 193?*).

**“ONE CANNOT COUNT THE NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS IN THE COLLECTION THAT HAVE CONTENT OF GREAT HISTORICAL AND LITERARY VALUE. . .” (SHARON 1949)**

The Schwadron Collection is an unparalleled assemblage of rich and unique primary sources that span four centuries of Jewish history.<sup>26</sup> It may be of interest to scholars and researchers in a wide range of disciplines: biography, history, paleography, Jewish studies, and other related fields. The collection covers Jewish achievements and excellence in the sciences, humanities, arts, politics, and religion. It provides insight into Jewish life, primarily in Europe, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and a detailed social history of the Jews: who they were, where they lived, what professions they entered, which languages they spoke, with whom they corresponded, and what they wrote about. The autographs provide a rare opportunity to delve into the minds and intimate thoughts of their authors and glimpse the events of the period as they were happening.

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<sup>25</sup> However, from Schwadron's file in the Hebrew University archive, it is clear that the latter did not meet many other requests he made.

<sup>26</sup> Most of the items are from the last two hundred years, with a few earlier examples including writings by Rabbi Joseph Caro and Rabbi Ovadia Sforno. The portraits are more recent although a small number date back to the nineteenth century including that of Chava Frank.

In all the fields in which Jews became prominent, Schwadron searched for autographs for his project. The collection contains examples of calling cards and signatures, but for the most part, it is a philographic collection comprising documents and letters from Nobel Prize-winners such as Sir Hans Adolf Krebs (Nobel 1953), politicians such as Walther Rathenau, architects such as Erich Mendelsohn, historians such as Sir Francis Palgrave, actors such as Sarah Bernhardt, academics such as Albert Einstein,<sup>27</sup> military men such as Colonel Kisch, philosophers such as Karl Marx, medical doctors such as Sigmund Freud, artists such as Josef Israels, poets such as Hayim Nahman Bialik, sculptors such as Georg Ehrlich, rabbis such as Rabbi Joseph Caro, composers such as Gustav Mahler, *maśkilim* (Enlightenment period scholars) such as Moses Mendelssohn, national heroes such as Hanna Szenes (Senesh), authors such as Shmuel Yosef Agnon, and Zionists such as Theodore Herzl. Even the world-famous magician Harry Houdini has a place in the Jewish pantheon.

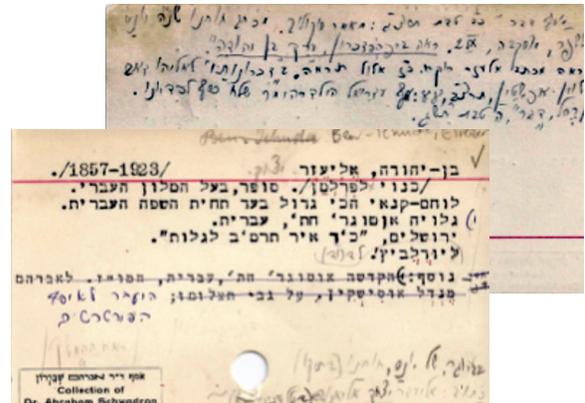
The people represented in the collection are Jews whom Schwadron considered contributors to Jewish history and society at large. His selection undoubtedly has a strong Ashkenazi European bias but Schwadron was a product of his time and he probably lacked knowledge of Jews in North Africa or the Orient, or was unable to obtain written material from those areas because he lacked a network of contacts there. The preponderance of European autographs in the collection may also reflect the dominant Ashkenazi culture and bias in academia and secular pre-State Palestine and even in the early years of the State. Schwadron's strong Zionist and nationalist beliefs may have led him to focus on representatives of European Jewry, as the main players on the stage of Zionist history and state building, and neglect American Jewry and Jews of *yishuv*, and later Israel. While the absence of American representatives points to Schwadron's unfamiliarity with American Jewry and lack of contacts there, it could also indicate that obtaining autographs in America would have been competitive and beyond Schwadron's financial reach. Or it may have been a result of Schwadron's focus on the geographical area and culture with which he was most familiar, for purely practical reasons, once he realized the immense task that he had taken on. There is a noticeable paucity of women represented in the collection, especially from the early years that the collection covers, but that is not surprising if one considers how few Jewish women were active in public life at that time.

Some autographs in the collection do provide a fascinating picture of social history in the *yishuv* and illustrate day-to-day events and dilemmas. For example, the file of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 19 93), chief rabbi of Palestine, contains a letter dated 20 Sivan 5673 (June 25, 1913) posing questions regarding flour for Pesach; a letter dated Shevat 3, 5683 (January 18, 1926) to Dr. Hugo Berman about extra copies of book for the *yeshivah*; a letter to Sir Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner in Palestine, asks him to talk to Rabbi Glick, who advocated settling the Galilee; and an official letter dated April 13, 1913 to the board of the Anglo-Palestine Bank concerns the transfer of an inheritance to the daughter of the late account holder.

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<sup>27</sup> In 2017, the NLI was legally obligated to transfer all original Einstein letters in the Schwadron Autograph Collection to the Albert Einstein Archives in the Hebrew University.

No less valuable and enlightening is Schwadron's precise documentation of his treasures' provenance. His notes, handwritten in pencil on most items in the collection, identify donor names, dates, and auction prices. Schwadron also recorded his research findings on the cards he prepared for his catalog; these notations became part of a social narrative unknowingly told by the collector-researcher, and rich primary sources in their own right (Figure 6).

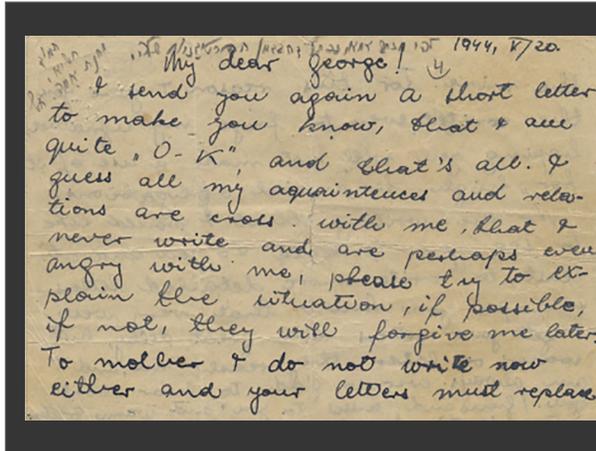


**Figure 6.** Original card catalog typed by Schwadron for Eliezer ben Yehudah. On the reverse side: Schwadron's hand-written notes (Archives Department, NLI)

Similarly, letters in the collection may reveal the thoughts and viewpoints of those who took part in historical events. For example, the collection includes a letter of Lionel Nathan de Rothschild (1808–1879), the first Jew to be elected to the British Parliament. The letter (August 4, 1858), sent in response to congratulations on his election, was mailed from France but written in both English and French. In it, Rothschild thanked the members of the Consistoire israélite in Bayonne and emphasized the historic significance of his achievement (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 20 187). In a letter dated July 6, 1928 another member of the Rothschild dynasty, Baron Edmund de Rothschild (1845–1934), explains to his biographer, David Druck, that behind his investment in settling the Land of Israel was his concern for the future of Judaism (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 20 176). On a more personal level is a letter from Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858–1922) to his wife, Hemda, written from a Turkish jail in 1893 on the second night of Hanukkah (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 02 226). Framed for sedition by his opponents in the *yishuv*, Ben-Yehuda sent an emotional letter, written the day before his trial, that was full of hope for his release the following day but that also expressed uncertainty because, “a person doesn't know what his fate is.”

Best known as the brave paratrooper who was dropped behind enemy lines in Hungary only to be captured and tortured by the Gestapo, Hannah Szenes (Senesh) also wrote poetry. The documents in her file, donated by her mother in 1951, reveal a mature young woman who was pondering the importance of life and higher duty. There are poems and a letter in Hebrew, a 1941 letter in Hungarian to her mother, and—perhaps most moving—a postcard to her brother George, written in English to pass the British army censors, apologizing for not being in touch often, hoping he would understand, and sending regards to her mother (Figure 7). The postcard is dated May 1944, just weeks before her capture (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 15 171).

Another potential area for research in Schwadron's autograph collection is the study of handwritten manuscripts for the creation of critical editions. Authors' manuscripts and composer's original scores bear handwritten comments and corrections that are vital to scholarship. Critical editions of authors' works also rely on original manuscripts for comparison with published



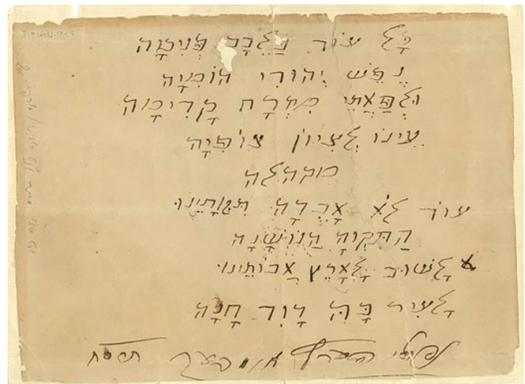
Dear George!

I send you again a short letter to make you know, that I am quite "O.K.," and that's all. I guess all my acquaintances and relations are cross with me, that I never write and are perhaps even angry with me, please try to explain the situation, if possible. If not, they will forgive me later. To mother I do not write now letters and your letter must replace

**Figure 7.** Postcard from Hannah Szenes (Senesh) to her brother George, May 20, 1944. (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 15 171)

works. Moreover, manuscripts can be helpful in the identification of anonymous manuscripts and the detection of forged manuscripts (a phenomenon not uncommon in rabbinical writings). Manuscripts may bear witness to unknown or unfamiliar versions of well-known works. For example, the 1908 autographed copy of Naftali Herz Imber's *ha-Tikvah*, a poem that became the national anthem of Israel (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 01 271; Figure 8), is not identical with the official text of the anthem.

The focus on Europe, especially nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, means that the collection has an added value that Schwadron could not have foreseen when he started out, but became aware of later: the collection serves as a repository of autographs representing a population that was destroyed in the Holocaust.<sup>28</sup> Not only were the autographs themselves saved from destruction, but they became the legacy of those who perished. For example, the German-Jewish ophthalmologist Arthur Czellitzer, who founded the Gesellschaft für jüdische Familienforschung (Society for Jewish Family Research) and was murdered in Sobibor in 1943, wrote Schwadron a letter (July 29, 1937) that included information about poet Ernst Doehm and his father (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 18 54). Another letter was written by Tova Altman, one of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising leaders, who died at the hands of the Gestapo in May 1943 (Tova Altman to Rachel Kimhit, 1939; Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 01 295).



**Figure 8.** Naftali Herz Imber's *ha-Tikvah*, 1908 (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 01 271)

In his pursuit of Jewish genius, Schwadron made some interesting discoveries, sometimes to the point of correcting the historical record. A fascinating example is in the file of David Schwarz. The file includes a letter in Schwarz's hand, but most of it is taken up with documents proving

<sup>28</sup> Schwadron mentions this as an important feature of the collection in a letter protesting his low wages, Jerusalem, 1946 and later in a letter to the president of the Hebrew University, appealing his forced retirement, Jerusalem, November 13, 1949. Both letters are in Schwadron's personal file in the Hebrew University Archives.

that Schwarz was actually the inventor of the Zeppelin airship, and not, as was widely believed, Count Zeppelin. The file contains the original contract signed by Schwarz's widow and Count Zeppelin, wherein she sells him the rights to the airship the day before the first test flight. Schwadron managed to find and purchase the letter from a Swiss antiquarian and he published an article about it in the *Palestine Post* in May 1940 (Schwadron 1940; Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 21 60). The issue was controversial; two years earlier, Hugo Eckener, Zeppelin's business successor, had published a book in which he tried to discredit Schwarz's claim about his connection to the Zeppelin airship (Eckener 1938). Using archival sources, Rolf Italiaander (1980) found support for the idea that Schwarz had designed a hard framework balloon that could be steered, and then approached Carl Berg, an aluminum factory owner, who invested a large amount of money to build the airship. Italiaander uncovered evidence that Zeppelin had been working on an airship model in parallel to Schwarz but had not considered a hard framework. It was in 1898, according to Italiaander, that Zeppelin bought the patent from Schwarz's widow and then worked together with Carl Berg on a better model. Italiaander added that it did not help Schwarz's case that he was not only a foreigner from Eastern Europe, but a Jew, who was challenging the account of a nobleman.<sup>29</sup>

The collection is an important resource for autographs of those who have been forgotten or removed from Jewish collective memory. Schwadron makes it clear in his introduction to the 1927 exhibition that his collection includes materials of some who had left the Jewish faith and their roots. One of his prized autographs is a letter of Heinrich Heine (January 9, 1826), who confessed his regret for converting because his situation has not improved and he was hated by Christians and Jews alike (Schwad. Aut. Coll. 01 05 127). The letter was on display throughout 2013–2014 in the Jewish museums of Hohenems, Frankfurt, and Munich, as part of a traveling exhibition on religious conversion.

In addition to the 232 boxes of Jewish autographs, the collection includes autographs of a small number of non-Jewish contributors for reasons we can only speculate about (Misrati forthcoming). According to his inventory, Schwadron had purchased non-Jewish autographs on occasion, but he may have been unable to refuse the donation of an autograph of a non-Jewish celebrity, especially if there were some Jewish context, such as additional evidence of the Jewish contribution to civilization and world events. An interesting illustration of this is a letter dated April 24, 1910 from the leader of the first Chinese republic, Sun-Yat Sen, to the Jewish envoy in Shanghai, Mr. Elias, declaring his “sympathy for this [Zionist] movement ... All lovers of democracy cannot help but support whole-heartedly and welcome with enthusiasm the movement to restore your wonderful and historic nation, which has contributed so much to the civilization of the world and which rightfully deserve [sic] an honorable place in the family of nations” (Sun Yat-sen file; unprocessed collection).

The British politician Josiah Wedgwood is even more expressive of his admiration for the Jew-

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<sup>29</sup> The NLI copy of Italiaander's book has the following German autograph on the first page: “in memory of David Schwarz...”

ish people and their national library in a letter dated November 11, 1928: “The Library of the University in Jerusalem should replace in future ages the library of Alexandria... For from it civilization will spread throughout the Eastern world...” (Josiah Wedgwood file [unprocessed], Schwad. Aut. Coll.). Schwadron did not always keep the non-Jewish autographs, however. Dov Sadan related that while Schwadron was still in Europe, he received a collection of autographs of famous clergymen. He immediately put an advertisement in the newspaper, announcing that he had this collection in his possession and was willing to exchange it for Jewish autographs.

## ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION: FROM CARD CATALOG TO DIGITAL GALLERIES

The Schwadron Collection card catalog, created by the collector himself and expanded over the years, was the primary means of access to the collection within the JNUL building in Jerusalem. The collection was not included in the 1980s JNUL retrospective online conversion project but the library did publicize the Schwadron Collection by holding exhibitions. Indeed, Schwadron’s purpose in staging his first exhibition in 1923 was to make the public aware of the collection and engage the community in building it. Donating the collection to JNUL was part of that plan, and Schwadron worked steadfastly to bring the collection to the attention of world Jewry (Schwadron 1949). The thirteenth Zionist Congress in Carlsbad (August 1923) served as a fitting opportunity for Schwadron to display some of the more impressive autographs from his collection: Ginsberg Uscher (Aḥad Ha’am), M. I. Berdiczewski (Ben Gurion), Moscheh Leib Lilienblum, and Paul Ehrlich were just some of them (Schwad. Arc., box AC-3823; Central Zionist Arc., I/7a-e). The display had been arranged before Schwadron made *aliyah* in 1926—all the major autograph exhibitions that followed were held in Israel, where the collection has been at the center of many exhibitions put together by the JNUL, and collection items were featured in other JNUL exhibitions. A 1955 exhibition, held at Eitingon House on Balfour Street in Jerusalem, featured manuscripts from the collections of the JNUL and items from Schwadron’s collection, and it was reviewed in several newspapers (Schwad. Arc., box AC-3823). In 1965, the JNUL put on an exhibition entitled “Jewish Nobel Prize Winners (Autographs and Portraits from the Schwadron Collection),” which displayed the draft of Paul Ehrlich’s lecture on chemotherapy given before Kaiser Wilhelm II, and letters of Otto Heinrich Warburg, Albert Einstein, and James Franck, among others.<sup>30</sup> Major exhibitions of JNUL’s treasured collections opened to the public in 1970 and 1985, and autographs from the Schwadron Collection constituted an important part of them (see exhibit catalogues, JNUL 1970, 1985). Individual autographs were on display at exhibitions both within the JNUL and elsewhere, and the collection was in regular use in reading rooms of the Archives Department.<sup>31</sup>

When the JNUL became the National Library of Israel in 2008, it became clear that the Schwadron Collection should be one of the first collections to be made accessible online. Initially, the digitization project was intended to cover the entire Schwadron Collection—both autographs

<sup>30</sup> Internal material from the Archives Department including a list of the JNUL exhibitions from 1960, the captions used in the exhibition and photographs of the showcase.

<sup>31</sup> The order slips, preserved in the Archives Department, may be surveyed to follow up that usage of the collection throughout the years.

and portraits—but budget constraints meant that only part of each could be included. The NLI preferred to digitize complete collections so the portraits were selected because the autograph collection was twice its size (over 5,800 files occupying 30 linear meters of shelf space). The immediacy of the visual images for both scholars and the public was another factor in that decision. The digitization project of the portrait collection, made possible by a grant from the David and Fela Shapell Family, was accomplished in three stages: The first stage, completed within a year, consisted of integrating the metadata from Schwadron’s card catalog into NLI’s online catalog; during the second stage, collection files were prepared for scanning; the third stage was dedicated to scanning the portraits. Every photograph was scanned both front and back with no reduction in quality. The collection, part of NLI’s Visual Memory portal, is still arranged alphabetically, according to the Hebrew alphabet: The file names are also available in Roman characters (following names of people), but all other information is in Hebrew only. Users may browse the collection by name or keyword. The records are linked to NLI’s discovery tool at <http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/digitallibrary/photos/Schwadron/Pages/default.aspx>.

The first stage in the digitization of the autograph collection, a much larger undertaking in comparison to the portraits collection, is nearly complete; the next stages will take some time due to copyright issues and the sheer magnitude of the collection. The online discoverability of the collection takes Schwadron’s vision one step further: as he described in many of his own articles (summarized in Rosenbach 1932), Schwadron’s great dream was to establish an institute for Jewish biography in association with the Jewish National Library, which would serve as the basis for an iconographic inventory and facsimiles of autographs representing famous Jewish individuals from all over the world. The digitization and dissemination of the collection via the NLI website fulfill Schwadron’s vision.

## CONCLUSION

Abraham Schwadron’s unique collection reflects a mosaic of Jewish life over several centuries, chiefly in Europe and Palestine/Israel. The collection covers Jewish achievements and excellence in all fields of human endeavor; wherever Jews came to the fore, Schwadron was determined to add their autographs to his collection. The presentation of the collection to the JNUL makes Schwadron a link in the historical process of establishing a national library. It was Joshua Heschel Lewin of Volozhin who in 1872 first called for the establishment of a library that would serve as a focal point for the collection of all the books of the Jewish people. The founders of the Jerusalem Midrash Abrabanel Library took up this call in 1892 and established a central library for Jewish literature and other relevant works for the purpose of creating a national asset for all Jews. Schwadron’s desire to build a Jewish national collection complements these visions of the Jewish National and University Library. The university’s mandate was to serve the Jewish people and the State of Israel by enabling scholars and other interested readers around the world to recognize the scope of Jewish civilization. The library changed status with the enactment of the National Library Law of 2007, when it became the National Library of Israel. The goals of Israel’s national library are “to collect, preserve, develop, and endow the collections of knowledge, heritage and culture in general, and those of the Jewish People, the State and the Land of Israel

in particular.”<sup>32</sup> While the collection encapsulates the vision of what the library represented in Schwadron’s day, it is still relevant today. Schwadron was a cultured, idealistic man who was dedicated to his collection, almost to the point of obsession. The NLI’s decision to make the collection accessible online is a fitting contemporary recognition of the richness and importance of the Abraham Schwadron Collection and a confirmation of its integral place in the National Library of Israel.

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### ABBREVIATIONS

Albert Einstein Arc.: The Albert Einstein Archives, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

NLI Arc.: National Library of Israel Archive, Jerusalem.

Schwad. Aut. Coll.: Schwadron Autograph Collection, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

Schwad. Arc.: Abraham Schwadron Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

Schwad. pers. file HUI: Abraham Schwadron. 042, personal file. Central Archive, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Tidhar Arc.: David Tidhar Archive, National Library of Israel, Jerusalem.

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