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## Retrieval of Judaica from Electronic Media: An Overview

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### Types of Electronic Media

In the past few years, we have witnessed the rise of a multiplicity of electronic databases in online and CD-ROM formats. While most of these are broad and general in their coverage, some include resources of great value to the Judaica researcher. Indeed, for certain Judaica serial titles, many of these databases now provide the only indexing available. Judaica librarians need to familiarize themselves with what is available and learn how to access it. This article provides an introduction to some of the treasures that await the Judaica researcher who uses electronic tools.

The electronic databases that are discussed here fall into two main categories: those on CD-ROM and those available online through a telecommunications connection with a modem. CD-ROM is a newer format for information access than online, but it resembles traditional library formats, such as microfilm, more than online does. CD-ROMs are 4.72-inch circles of plastic that look just like audio compact disks but are capable of storing voluminous amounts of information. The equivalent of 250,000 written pages can be contained on a disk, yet any piece of data can be located within a few seconds. CD-ROMs may contain graphics and sound, in addition to text. To operate a CD-ROM, one must have either an IBM or compatible computer, or a Macintosh. These machines must be equipped with a CD-ROM drive.

Online databases, on the other hand, are accessed through telephone lines, using a piece of equipment called a modem. Commercial online vendors such as DIALOG and Datatimes are like large department stores of information. Such systems may contain many hundreds of databases, each devoted to a different field. There is also a huge quantity of Judaica information on the non-commercial Internet, which is a mega-network of computer networks based largely in universities and research centers.

Cost, availability, and frequency of use are three factors that should be considered when deciding among the various electronic tools. CD-ROMs are generally purchased outright, except for those which are offered on a subscription basis. In either case, the library knows exactly how much it will have to spend on the product. Online search charges, on the other hand, are based on the amount of time connected. Therefore, the final costs to the library can be unpredictable. Online systems offer a far broader range of databases to search, however. If the database one requires is available in CD-ROM format and is a source that will be accessed frequently, one should consider purchasing the CD-ROM disk. For those databases that are used infrequently or are not available in CD-ROM format, online searching is probably the better choice. It must be kept in mind that the online version of a database is always more up-to-date than the CD-ROM. Following the descriptions of selected CD-ROM and online databases are descriptions of selected search services through which databases may be searched for a fee.

### CD-ROM Resources

Several CD-ROM disks of interest to Judaica researchers have appeared on the market recently.

**Judaic Classics**—The texts of a number of classic Jewish primary sources are available in CD-ROM format from Davka Corporation, on a disk called *The Judaic Classics CD Library*. This CD-ROM, which sells for \$599, operates on either a Macintosh or IBM computer. Included on the disk are the entire contents of the Tanakh, Babylonian Talmud, Aggadic midrashim, Mishneh Torah, Zohar, and Rashi on both the *Humash* and the Talmud. The sources may be searched individually or together. By typing in the word *ahvah*, for example, one could find its location in all of the texts included on the disk. Searching for information on CD-ROMs not only allows for fast retrieval of data, but also permits one to

search for data in ways that are not possible in printed texts. For more information, contact Davka Corporation, 7074 N. Western Ave., Chicago, IL 60645; telephone: (800) 621-8227.

**Middle East**—Another CD-ROM product of interest to Jewish libraries is *Middle East*, created by Quanta Press, Inc. (2550 University Ave. W., Suite 245N, St. Paul, MN 55114; (612) 641-0714), and available for both the Macintosh and IBM for about \$150. (This is a one-time charge; the publisher has not indicated that an update is planned.) The disk covers the Middle East from antiquity to the present, and includes biographical, economic, geographical, and political information, as well as 100 photographs.

**Computerized Israel Center**—The World Zionist Organization has also produced a CD-ROM about Israel, entitled *The Computerized Israel Center*. Available in both Macintosh and IBM formats, it integrates sound, text, and graphics to bring the viewer information on the cities, archaeology, museums, nature preserves, history, demographics, and language of Israel. Of particular interest to libraries serving young adults is the section on study programs in Israel. For more information on hardware requirements and price, contact Marc Schulman at the World Zionist Organization (110 East 59th Street, New York, NY 10022; (212) 752-0600).

**Ethnic Newswatch**—For the full text of regional Jewish newspapers, librarians might want to subscribe to a CD-ROM called *Ethnic Newswatch*. The table accompanying this article details which newspapers are available on this CD-ROM (see column 3). There is no equivalent print index for many of these newspapers. *Ethnic Newswatch* is a new service that can be purchased quarterly, semi-annually, or annually. Contact Softline Information (65 Broad Street, Stamford, CT; (203) 975-8292).

[Additional compact disks produced in Israel are described in Libby Kahane's column in the Reference Department of this issue.—Ed.]

**DIALOG Databases**—Librarians who have done any online searching are certainly familiar with DIALOG, that department store of several hundred databases, each of which focuses on a particular area. What may be less well known is that many journals of Jewish interest are indexed in a variety of databases on DIALOG. Table 1 provides details about some of these journals. In addition, the interested reader should consult Yael Penkower's excellent article, "Judaica in Computer Databases" (Penkower, 1990–1991), which offers an overview of online searching operations, as well as a list of systems and networks, such as DIALOG, RLIN, and OCLC, containing material of interest to the Judaica specialist.

DIALOG databases come in three formats—full text, abstracts, and bibliographic citations; all the Judaica serials covered by DIALOG have abstracts. As is evident from the table, most full-text journals are business-oriented, e.g., *Israel Economist*. Also of interest on DIALOG is the Arab Information Bank, which indexes more than 20 Arab newspapers.

Searching on DIALOG can be expensive, but the company does offer special rates to educational institutions teaching database searching to students through a program called Classmate. More information about DIALOG is available by calling (800) 334-2564.

**Jerusalem Post**—Full text of the *Jerusalem Post*, from 1991 on, can be obtained through Datatimes, an online service similar to DIALOG, but focusing on newspapers and newsletters. Datatimes can be reached at (800) 642-2525.

**KOMPASS Register of Industry and Commerce**—Businessmen looking to invest or do business in Israel will find the KOMPASS Register of Industry and Commerce of Israel, produced by Kompass Israel Ltd. (118 Ahad Haam St., 64253 Tel Aviv, Israel; 03-5619374) of use. This directory database provides information on Israeli industrial and commercial firms, including details of type of business activity conducted, management, employees, and annual turnover. The database can be accessed in the United States through DataStar, at \$107 per connect hour; 50 cents per full record displayed online; \$1.00 per full record printed offline.

## Search Services

**Responsa Project**—A database focusing on primary sources is The Responsa Project, from the Bar-Ilan University Institute for Information Retrieval and Computational Linguistics (52900 Ramat-Gan, Israel; telephone: 03-5318716). The database contains the complete text of 252 volumes of rabbinical responsa collections, spanning 1,000 years and covering more than 30 countries. It also includes the Bible, 36 tractates of the Babylonian Talmud with Rashi's commentary, 20 volumes of the collected works of S. Y. Agnon, Maimonides' code, medieval Biblical commentaries, and Midrashic literature.

**Bibliography of Modern Hebrew Literature**—Students of Hebrew literature may be interested in searches of the Bibliography of Modern Hebrew Literature in Translation, a service provided by the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature (P.O. Box 10051, 52001 Ramat-Gan, Israel; 03-5796830). The database contains citations to Hebrew literature translated into world languages. It includes references to book reviews and articles by leading literary critics on recent Hebrew publications, as well as dissertations. [For a detailed description of this bibliography, see Goldberg (1985).—Ed.] Bibliographic in format, the database begins coverage in 1948, and currently has 20,000 records.

**Jewish Family Name File**—Genealogists will be delighted by the Jewish Family Name File, created by David Louis Gold at the University of Haifa, Mount Carmel (1610 Eshkol Tower, 31 995 Haifa, Israel; 04-240190). Mr. Gold has taken Jewish family names, given names, and family trees of Jews, and has provided their etymology and their meaning. Mr. Gold will search a name in the database if the requestor sends two international reply coupons. Anyone interested may register a name free of charge. In the summer, Mr. Gold may be reached at 67-07 215 St., Oakland Gardens, NY 11364-2523.

**Internet**—Library literature is increasingly filled with references to the Internet. Internet is a global network of networks that provides access to hundreds of thousands of computers throughout the world. At present, as already noted, it links mostly universities and scholarly institutions. Recently, the Internet has gone public, and now almost any institution that wants to can gain access to it through dialup services that have nominal monthly charges. For example, a school could access the Internet by purchasing a PSI Global account for \$29 per month (Notess, 1992).

What is available on the Internet that might be of interest to the Judaica researcher? First, one can access the online public access catalogs (OPACs) of several Israeli university libraries, including the Hebrew University, Bar-Ilan, Tel Aviv University, the Technion, and others. In addition to records of the monograph holdings of these libraries, one can also access databases, such as the Index to Hebrew Periodicals (Greenbaum, 1983) and the Index of Israeli Legal Journals (Cuomo, 1987). The Internet also supports other information services of potential interest, whose exploration is beyond the scope of this paper.

This overview constitutes but a brief introduction to what promises to be the most burgeoning area of information access the Jewish world has seen in many years. It is fascinating, exciting, and we librarians have to make it our own.

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**Table 1. Judaica Serials in Electronic Databases**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Category</b>
American Jewish Archives	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—History
American Jewish History	Abstract	Dialog—Academic Index	Scholarly—History
American Jewish History	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—History
Baltimore Jewish Times	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Biblical Archaeologist	Abstract	Dialog—Academic Index	Scholarly—Bible
Commentary	Abstract	Dialog—Magazine Index	Popular
Detroit Jewish News	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Greater Phoenix Jewish News	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Hebrew Union College Annual	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—General
Hebrew University Studies in Literature and the Arts	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—General
Icen—Israel Commercial Economic Newsletter	Full Text	Dialog—Pts Promt	Business
Innovation	Full Text	Dialog—Pts Promt	Business
International Journal of Middle East Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Academic Index	Scholarly—Middle East
International Journal of Middle East Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—Middle East
Israel Business	Full Text	Dialog—Pts Newsletter	Business
Israel Business Today	Full Text	Dialog—Trade & Industry	Business
Israel Economist	Full Text	Dialog—Trade & Industry	Business
Israel Exploration Journal	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—History
Israel Exploration Journal	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—History
Israel High-Tech Report	Full Text	Dialog—Pts Promt	Business
Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences	Abstract	Dialog—Psychinfo	Scholarly—Social Science
Israel Journal of Psychiatry and Related Sciences	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—Social Science
Israel Journal of Psychology & Counseling in Education	Abstract	Dialog—Psychinfo	Scholarly—Social Science
Israel Social Science Research	Abstract	Dialog—Psychinfo	Scholarly—Social Science
Jerusalem Post	Full Text	Datetimes	News
Jerusalem Post	Abstract	Dialog—Pts Promt	News
Jewish Advocate	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Jewish Art	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—Arts
Jewish Exponent	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Jewish Journal	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Jewish Journal of Sociology	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—Social Science
Jewish Language Review	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—Literature
Jewish Quarterly Review	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—General
Jewish Social Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—Social Science
Jewish Social Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—Social Science
Jewish Telegraphic Agency	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Jewish Times	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Jewish Week	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Journal of Biblical Literature	Abstract	Dialog—Academic Index	Scholarly—Bible
Journal of Biblical Literature	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—Bible
Journal of Jewish Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—General
Journal of Near Eastern Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Academic Index	Scholarly—Middle East
Journal of Near Eastern Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—Middle East
Journal of Palestine Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—Middle East
Journal of Semitic Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—Middle East
Judaism	Abstract	Dialog—Academic Index	Scholarly—General
Judaism	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—General
Meed—Middle East Economic Digest	Full Text	Dialog—Trade & Industry	Business
Megamot	Abstract	Dialog—Psychinfo	Scholarly—Social Science
Mid East Business Digest	Full Text	Dialog—Pts Newsletter	Business
Middle East Journal	Abstract	Dialog—Academic Index	Scholarly—Middle East
Middle East Journal	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—Middle East
Middle East News Network	Full Text	Dialog—Pts Promt	News
Middle East Review	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—Middle East
Middle Eastern Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Academic Index	Scholarly—Middle East
Middle Eastern Studies	Abstract	Dialog—Social Sciences	Scholarly—Middle East
Mideast Markets	Full Text	Dialog—Pts Promt	Business
Modern Hebrew Literature	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—Literature
Northern California Jewish Bulletin	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Revue Des Etudes Juives	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—General
Technion Research and Development News	Full Text	Dialog—Pts Promt	Business
Tikkun	Abstract	Dialog—Magazine Index	Popular
Tradition	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—General
Washington Jewish Week	Full Text	Ethnic Newswatch	News
Yiddish	Abstract	Dialog—Arts & Humanities	Scholarly—Literature

*This selected list was compiled by consulting printed information from DIALOG, Ethnic Newswatch, and Datetimes, as well as Ulrich's online.*