Tribute to Heidi G. Lerner upon Her Retirement

Yermiyahu Ahron Taub

In June 2021, Heidi G. Lerner retired from her position as metadata librarian for Hebraica and Judaica at the Green Library, Stanford University, after more than thirty years. Before that, Heidi had worked as a Slavic serials librarian and cataloging librarian at Stanford, a reference librarian at the Palo Alto Public Library, an indexer/abstracter, a research librarian for a magazine, and a music librarian for the San Francisco Opera and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This tremendous breadth of knowledge and experience was evident in any initiative that Heidi undertook and in encounters with Heidi herself. Heidi's tenure as cataloging/metadata librarian for Hebraica paralleled the acquisition and processing of approximately 90,000 titles in Hebrew script at Stanford University. Indeed, Heidi played a central role in integrating these materials into Stanford's collection and making them discoverable to Stanford students and faculty as well as to researchers all over the world. Through her work at Stanford and in the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) and other organizations, Heidi made enormous contributions both to her home institution and to the field of Jewish librarianship and to learning as a whole.

Heidi's career in Jewish and Judaica librarianship began with her studies towards an MLS at the Graduate School of Librarianship and Archive Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1979–1982. Within this framework she not only formally studied librarianship, but she also had the good fortune to study and work alongside some of the great Judaica librarians and bibliophiles of the twentieth century. Among them were Dr. Bluma Peritz, Tsiyon Shorer, Dr. Israel Adler, Dr. Leila Avrin, Batya Bayer, Dr. Gila Flam, Moshe Shpitzer, H.J. Katzenstein, and Dr. Dov Shidorksy.

Heidi's arrival at Stanford in 1991 marked a moment of considerable transition in the field of technical services librarianship. Like many other North American academic and research libraries, Stanford had begun to include original scripts in its online catalog for non-Latin script resources. Institutions faced choices such as if, and how much, original script should be included in catalog records. Stanford University Libraries (SUL) had to evaluate the financial and technical resources that were available for cataloging Hebrew, and the tradeoffs between benefits

and their costs. Heidi surveyed the practices at other institutions and published the results of her study in *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly*.[1] She also organized a panel for the 1993 AJL convention on the contemporaneous practices of cataloging Hebraica, the output of which was published in *Judaica Librarianship*.[2]

Although Hebrew script was increasingly being used in her early tenure at Stanford, many bibliographical records still appeared only in romanization. Students and faculty needed to be familiar with the ALA/LC romanization tables, broadly accepted as the standard in library catalogs, to locate the materials that they needed. There is a plethora of romanization schemes for Hebrew and the likelihood that they would be familiar with the ALA/LC one was remote at best. In addition, a thorough knowledge of Hebrew grammar is required to search successfully for Hebrew resources for which bibliographical data is available only in romanization. To address this issue, Heidi developed a program for teaching the specifics of ALA/LC romanization of Hebrew and the important facets of Hebrew grammar. Following the success of this program, she published an article in *Higher Hebrew Education*[3] describing the methodology, to benefit North American research libraries with Hebrew collections. In order to encourage and promote the discoverability of Judeo-Arabic and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish) resources, Heidi and Joan Biella, of the Library of Congress (LC), co-developed the ALA/LC romanization tables for these two languages.[4]

 The day-to-day workspaces for some Hebraica catalogers can sometimes feel isolating. Since the 1980s, LC has developed programs under the rubric of the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) to reach out to and partner with institutions and catalogers that may not have the resources for professional development, as well as to increase the number of high-quality cataloging records in the national utilities through various cooperative ventures such as the Name Authority Cooperative Program (NACO), the Monographic Bibliographic Record Cooperative Program, and the Subject Authority Cooperative Program. Heidi served as a trainer and coordinator for each of these programs, enabling Hebraica catalogers across North America to contribute to these programs alongside their other cataloging colleagues. As a catalog librarian at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, I was one of Heidi's NACO trainees. During my training, Heidi carefully reviewed all the new name authority records that I submitted and, when necessary, pointed me to the appropriate documentation. Through her unflagging encouragement and support, Heidi helped me improve the records that I created and, more broadly, ushered me warmly into the broader realm of Hebraica and Judaica technical services librarianship. Throughout the many years since then, I have seen Heidi provide that same level of mentorship to numerous others in the field.

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1. Heidi G. Lerner, "Access vs. Cost: A Look at Hebraica Cataloging in the U.S," *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 17:1-2, 1993, 115–131. https://doi.org/10.1300/J104v17n01_08.

2. Heidi G. Lerner, "Current Practices and Standards of Cataloging Hebraica in RLIN," *Judaica Librarianship* 8:1–2 (1994), 25–27. https://doi.org/10.14263/2330-2976.1224.

3. Heidi G. Lerner, "Searching for Hebraica in the American Academic Library: A Workshop Proposal for the Teaching of Romanization," *Higher Hebrew Education* 10 (2002), 127–149.

4. https://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html.

From 1993 to 2012, Heidi volunteered to serve for several hours a week at the SUL reference desk (later renamed Information Center). This additional responsibility increased her understanding of how students, faculty, and researchers searched for and used the diverse resources held by SUL, giving Heidi a unique perspective for a librarian traditionally focusing on cataloging responsibilities. The growth in her own knowledge led to a series of workshops that she presented to Stanford graduate students. These workshops then grew into a series of columns entitled "Perspectives on Technology" for the Association for Jewish Studies (AJS) newsletter, *AJS Perspectives*, on the changes that were emerging in Jewish studies and other disciplines' research methodologies that came about with the expansion of information resources on the internet and other digital platforms. These columns were supported by articles in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*[5] and *Shofar*.[6]

The world of cataloging and metadata description has undergone numerous transformations since the early 2000s. A major change in 2010 was the introduction of a new descriptive cataloging standard called Resource Description and Access (RDA). Stanford took a leadership role in this changing environment and joined the group of early testers and adopters of RDA. To provide support and knowledge to fellow catalogers in institutions across North America, Joan Biella and Heidi co-authored an article for a special issue of *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly*,[7] describing how RDA could be applied to Hebraica cataloging. This and other efforts eventually led to the publication of H*ebraica Cataloging RDA: A Guide to ALA-LC Romanization and Descriptive Cataloging*, co-written by Joan Biella, Benjamin Fryser, Heidi Lerner, and Paul Maher (June 2014).[8] *Hebraica Cataloging RDA* remains a highly consulted resource for catalogers, and indeed a model for other language/cultural cataloging communities seeking to apply the RDA instructions to their work.

Throughout her career, Heidi attended professional conferences on Jewish studies and librarianship, most significantly AJL and AJS, at which she gave 21 presentations on a variety of pertinent topics. She served as the chair of the AJL Research, Archives, and Special Libraries Division Cataloging Committee for three different terms. In 2014, she received AJL's Life Membership Award, which is "granted in recognition of outstanding leadership and professional contributions to the association and to the profession of Jewish librarianship."[9] To further her own profes-

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5. Heidi G. Lerner and Elhanan Adler, "The Role of Multilingual Computing in Jewish Studies," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 12:3 (2005), 281–290. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40753383.

6. Heidi G. Lerner, "Resources for Jewish Biography and Autobiography on the Internet," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 26:2 (2008), 128–42. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42944533.

7. Joan C. Biella and Heidi G. Lerner, "The RDA Test and Hebraica Cataloging: Applying RDA in One Cataloging Community," *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 49:7–8 (2011), 676–695. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639374.2011.616450.

8. Joan Copeland Biella, Benjamin Fryser, Heidi G. Lerner, and Paul Maher. *Hebraica Cataloging RDA: A Guide to ALA/LC Romanization and Descriptive Cataloging* (2014). https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/10748284.

9. Ann-Christe Galloway, "People in the News," *ACRL News* 75 (4), 2014, https://crln.acrl.org/index.php/crlnews/article/view/9115/10018.

sional development, Heidi took classes in rare book cataloging, Hebrew paleography, Wikidata, metadata description, Extensible Markup Language (XML), and Arabic language (four years of study), among others. In addition to the publications mentioned above, she also contributed seven other articles to refereed journals in Jewish studies and librarianship.

In the years just before her retirement, Heidi's pioneering work showed no signs of slowing down, as once again the library world has been experiencing tremendous change, this time in the realm of linked data. Alongside its movement into the semantic web, SUL is exploring the role of Wikimedia projects and, most importantly, Wikidata as a source for expanding visibility of libraries' resources and providing reusable linked structured data. With Stanford's 2019 acquisition of a discrete collection of Israeli Yiddish theater posters, Heidi developed a prototype international knowledge base for Yiddish performing arts based on Wikidata. She presented her work on this project at the 2020 AJS conference and at the 2021 international conference, #DH-Jewish—Jewish Studies in the Digital Age.

While all the accomplishments delineated above are deeply worthy of celebration, they tell only part of the story. For all the breadth and depth of her own work, Heidi was always interested in what others thought, always interested in ways to further the Judaica cataloging community's objectives. Heidi attended nearly all the AJL conferences since her first one in Miami Beach, Florida, in 1991. At those conferences, she never failed to reach out with a personal touch, to ask colleagues how they were doing and what was happening at their library or in their lives. In the preparation of this tribute, I went through my many emails to Heidi over the years. I even have a folder called "HeidiLerner" containing numerous emails—chiefly queries to Heidi on a broad range of cataloging issues. I refer to those emails often for the wisdom of the answers. But perhaps just as important as the answers themselves is the spirit that generated them. Heidi always responded promptly, thoroughly, and helpfully. Heidi was always interested in the question at hand and its implications for our practice, and she never lost patience with follow-up questions, no matter how many there ended up being. My perusal of these emails made me think about the accretion of impact, the build-up over time of the effects of expertise generously shared quietly in the realm of everyday work and in the insistence of the importance—the essential value—of technical services work in enabling access to vital cultural resources. Together, these emails form a collective complement to Heidi's many publications and public accomplishments. I am certain that the emails in my own folder are "joined" by similar ones in the inboxes of other colleagues. And so, on the occasion of her retirement, we celebrate Heidi's many roles—librarian, scholar, pioneer, mentor, devoted correspondent, dear colleague, and friend—knowing that we will feel their effects far beyond this medium, this moment. Simply put, we will cherish Heidi G. Lerner's contributions for many years to come.

Heidi, we celebrate you, and we wish you a wonderful retirement!