

The Recovery of Nazi Looted Books in the UCLA Library: From Prague to Los Angeles and Back

Diane Mizrachi

University of California Los Angeles Library

Ivan Kohout

Jewish Museum in Prague

Michal Bušek

Jewish Museum in Prague

INTRODUCTION

In 1964, the University of California published a report on recent activities from each of its system libraries. Highlights from the library at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) noted the acquisition of “more than 33,000 volumes, constituting almost the entire stock of an internationally known Jerusalem book dealer ... [and consisting] of a number of famous collections of private persons and institutions ... [including] ... Prager Israelitische Cultus-Gemeinde...” (University of California System 1964, 50–51). Nearly sixty years later, that note served as a crucial lead for Ivan Kohout, curator of the Collection of Rare Printed Books at the Jewish Museum in Prague (JMP). For several years, Kohout has been on a mission to locate and rebuild the prewar collection of the Prager Israelitische Cultus-Gemeinde (Jewish Religious Community Library in Prague; JRCLP), which is now under the JMP administration. Following up on that lead, Kohout began searching the UCLA Library catalog, spending hours viewing scans of the library’s collection in the HathiTrust online database. Eventually, he discovered three books from the JRCLP’s prewar catalog in the UCLA Library. In June 2021, Kohout contacted Diane Mizrachi, librarian for Jewish and Israel Studies at UCLA, to request the return of those precious volumes. Subsequent searches uncovered three more JRCLP titles. Upon verification of the claims, the UCLA Library immediately agreed to repatriate the books, and then embarked on a campaign to raise awareness and promote dialog on the important issues surrounding materials of questionable provenance in academic library collections.

This article details the search for the books from the Jewish Religious Community Library in Prague that were looted and dispersed by the Nazis, and the current efforts to rebuild the JRCLP original collection. It traces the historical background of the Prague library, the Nazis’ policies of confiscating Jewish books for their proposed institutes on the “Jewish Question,” and the way that some of those confiscated books could have ended up in the UCLA Library. Librarians at UCLA did not find any professional or academic discussions in English on the repatriation of looted material from academic libraries, even though communities in the domains of museum and art have dealt with these issues for decades. We share here the repatriation processes we developed and our quest to publicize this issue as broadly as possible. We also discuss methods that European librarians are currently using to research provenance and restitute Nazi looted books.

Ours is a singular case, and institutions must understand that each question of restitution should be considered within its own particular context. We offer some models for addressing repatriation questions and call for an organized English-language forum where Judaica librarians in academic libraries and archives everywhere can discuss these issues in order to promote broader understanding, collaboration, and action.

BACKGROUND OF THE PRAGUE COLLECTION

When the leaders of the Jewish Religious Community in Prague began receiving donations of Judaica from local members in the mid-1800s, they were prompted to establish a community library in which to house them. It took several years to secure a location and permanent librarian; the first ownership stamp was applied in 1864 when cataloging of the initial 400 volumes began. A significant boost to the collection came in 1867 upon the death of Chief Rabbi Salomon Judah Rapoport, who willed his 3,000 books and 33 manuscripts to the fledgling library. At that time, only students and teachers at the Talmud Torah school were allowed access to the works. The collection had outgrown its space and was moved to a temporary location as the library committee and communal leaders sought a more suitable site and organizational scheme. The library finally opened to the public in April 1874, as one of the earliest Jewish community libraries in Europe. Such libraries were not affiliated with a specific synagogue or yeshiva and contained traditional Judaica and some secular works in various genre and languages.¹ According to a contemporary report (Bušek 2007, 19), the collection included nearly 250 books printed before 1650, the oldest of which was *Makre Dardeke*, a Hebrew glossary printed in Naples in 1488, which is considered the first and most significant work of its kind (Gottheil and Levias nd). A second noteworthy addition was the donation of 2,500 books from the scholar and community leader Koppelman (Kalman) Lieben in 1891. That collection contained many rare volumes printed in Prague, and similarly to the Rapoport collection, it was kept separate from the main circulating material (Bušek 2007, 19).

When the Prague Jewish ghetto was rehabilitated as part of a city-wide urban renewal project in the 1890s and early twentieth century, three synagogues and several other buildings were marked for destruction, including the building housing the library, forcing it once again to find a new home. Simultaneously, concern over the loss of Jewish ritual items and artifacts during the renewal project motivated community leaders to establish the Jewish Museum in Prague as a separate entity in 1906. Its goal was to document the history and customs of Bohemian Jews and to preserve artifacts from the synagogues that were destroyed during the renovations. The older community library came under the broader jurisdiction of the museum only after World War II (Bušek 2007, 50).

1. Jewish community libraries were established throughout major European centers as the Haskalah (Enlightenment) movement progressed in the latter nineteenth century. The largest was the Strashun Library in Vilna. For selected discussions, see Rabinowitz 2019; Glickman 2016; and Rydell 2017.

Tobias Jakobovits, a scholar of rabbinical studies, arrived in Prague in 1912 to take the position of assistant librarian of the community library, and eventually served as its director until the Nazi confiscation in 1939. During his tenure, the holdings grew to nearly 30,000 items of Judaica, Hebraica, periodicals, reference works, incunabula, and manuscripts going back to the twelfth century. Jakobovits succeeded in producing a card catalog and bound catalogs of all the collections, which serve as the basis for the reconstruction of the collection today.² Jakobovits's two sons were able to escape from Europe to Mandate-Palestine, but tragically, both he and his wife Berta were murdered in Auschwitz towards the end of the war (Bušek 2007, 25).

WORLD WAR II AND ITS IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

The Nazi policy to rid Europe of Jewish and “Non-German” literature and culture through confiscation and destruction is well known (for example, see Knuth 2003; Ovenden 2020, Glickman 2016; Rydell 2017). Simultaneously, party ideologists led by Alfred Rosenberg developed plans to build research institutions dedicated to the investigation of the “Jewish Question.” At proposed institutes in Berlin, Frankfurt, and elsewhere Nazi scholars would interpret Jewish texts from their perspectives in order to provide ‘scientific proof’ of their racial superiority and justify their campaigns to demonize Judaism and annihilate the Jewish race (Rydell 2017; Glickman 2016). Political philosopher Hanna Arendt later remarked that because of the Nazis’ “‘strange craze’ to establish museums commemorating their enemies, several services competed bitterly for the honor of establishing anti-Jewish museums and libraries” (cited in Knuth 2003, 85).

In order to support their institutes, the Nazis needed libraries of classical and core Jewish works. Confiscated books and archives, therefore, were packed into crates and sent to depots and centers throughout the Reich where Jewish prisoner-librarians and scholars were forced to sort through them. Items deemed of scholarly or commercial value were designated for Nazi libraries and museums, while those deemed worthless to the regime were designated for paper mills and destruction (Friedman and Friedman 1980). There are heroic stories of librarians risking their lives to rescue precious works by smuggling them out of the centers and carefully hiding them in the hopes of a peaceful and more tolerant future. Most librarians did not survive the ghettos and concentration camps (Rydell 2017; Schidorsky 1998; Glickman 2016).

The Nazis’ Institutes for Research into the Jewish Question were never realized, and the forced sorting of looted material never neared completion, but Ovenden (2020) estimates that by the end of World War II, up to one hundred million books had been confiscated, destroyed, or dispersed throughout Europe. Tens of millions were left in crates or stashed in abandoned buildings, monasteries, castles, cellars, caverns, and railway stations. Among all the other chaos in post-war Europe, the Western Allies were faced with the enormous task of trying to repatriate stolen cultural artifacts and property—works of art, furniture, and books. In 1945, the American Army began the process of collecting dispersed books in what had been the Rothschild Public Library

2. For a digitized copy of Jakobovits’s catalog, see <https://kramerius4.jewishmuseum.cz/search/i.jsp?pid=uuid:4636ee33-26f5-413f-b004-164ed66f7a36>.

in Frankfurt am Main, but they were soon overwhelmed by the sheer volume of incoming material. They moved the project to the former I.G. Farber building in Offenbach and assigned Captain Seymour Pomrenze, a trained archivist (1915–2011), as the first director of the Offenbach Archival Depot. His successor, Captain Isaac Bencowitz (1896–1972), and his assistant, Rouben Sami (1922–2019), a trained librarian, developed a novel system of identifying and sorting material based on photographic records of bookplates, ownership stamps, and any other identifying marks in the books (Gallas 2019; Rydell 2017).

The Army's official policy at Offenbach was to return material to their original owners or heirs, whether institutions or individuals, or to repatriate to the country of origin. Jewish leaders vocally disagreed with the latter, arguing that works whose owners could not be identified or located should be distributed among Jewish communities in pre-state Palestine, North America, and elsewhere.³ Eventually, the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction organization (JCR) took over operations at Offenbach from the U.S. Army. Leading scholars who served as officers in JCR included Salo Baron, Hannah Arendt, Lucy Dawidowicz, Leo Baeck, and Gershom Scholem (Gallas 2019; Leff 2018). Through official and unofficial, legal and extra-legal means, millions of books and archival materials were distributed from Offenbach and other centers to libraries and Jewish institutions worldwide. Dozens of booksellers and dealers also acquired crates of materials (Leff 2018; Gallas 2019; Rydell 2017; Waite 2002).

JRCLP IN THE WAR AND POSTWAR ERAS

The Jewish Religious Community Library in Prague was among the tens of thousands of personal and institutional libraries whose collections were confiscated and dispersed by the Nazis during the war. However, even though the JRCLP was dissolved, the Nazis agreed to allow the museum's operations to continue as the renamed Jewish Central Museum (JCM) and placed Jakobovits as its director from 1942 to 1945. The museum's primary task was the absorption of relics and properties, including books, from abolished Jewish communities and deported individuals in Bohemia and its environs. The Nazis had those items carefully recorded in a bound German language catalog. The museum's book holdings, which were separate from the Religious Community Library, consisted primarily of traditional Judaic literature, works of Jewish studies, and literature of any genre by Jewish authors, and included many duplicated holdings. "Most of the works existed in several copies," notes Michal Bušek, a reflection of reading trends and interests of that time and place (2007, 34).

The Jewish Museum in Prague reopened after the war under the direction of Dr. Hana Volavkova, the only member of the war-era JCM staff to survive (Bušek 2007, 46). Like the Offenbach sorting station, between 1945 and 1950 the museum operated as the center for the absorption, processing, and redistribution of books and materials discovered in crates and depositories around Bohemia. Otto Muneles (1894–1967), who had headed the "Talmudkommando" (librarian-prisoners) at Theresienstadt, was named chief librarian (Bušek 2007, 39; Rydell 2017). More

3. For further reading on this topic, see for example Lustig 2017; 2022.

than 190,000 volumes were processed during that period, of which 158,132 were restituted or redistributed to various institutions. For example, in 1945, the museum distributed 520 prayer books to 52 renewed Jewish communities in the area. The number of books and artefacts distributed to these communities increased over the next five years totaling 20,000 items by 1950. Approximately half of the original Religious Community Library collection was recovered after the war, and even though JRCLP operations were placed under the auspices of the museum, the collection itself was treated as a separate entity (Bušek 2007, 48).

In 1950, the new communist government in Czechoslovakia nationalized the museum and severely limited its activities and communications with institutions outside of the Soviet orbit. Searching for precious items missing from the prewar JRCLP was nearly impossible and was not a high priority. During the fifty years of Communist rule, few, if any, items were recovered, and it was only after the “Velvet Revolution” in 1989 that the isolation ended and the “. . . museum began to be transformed into a fully functional workplace cooperating with many foreign institutions” (Bušek 2007, 71). In November of 1994, the state returned all the collections to the Federation of Jewish Communities and, by 1995, the current structure of the Jewish Museum was established, including administration of the prewar Religious Community Library.

RECOVERING JRCLP BOOKS

Recovering books from the original Religious Community Library disbursed among locations worldwide involves patience, determination, and luck. Ivan Kohout, curator of the Collection of Rare Printed Books at the Jewish Museum in Prague describes the process:

The identification of the books of JRCLP provenance is a work of genuine research. I look for them primarily in auctions of Hebrew prints and in the catalogs of major Western libraries. The basic assumption is that during the nearly eighty years of their absence, the books passed through the hands of several holders and changed their location several times. Nowadays, they are found all over the world. I try to identify the books based on provenance marks, mostly stamps and catalog numbers. Other important provenance marks include signatures of donors, such as Burial Society secretary Kalman Lieben, and the handwritten “Rapoport,” a note referring to items that were part of the collection donated to the JRCLP by Solomon Judah Rapoport, the Chief Rabbi of Czech lands. I look for these provenance marks in scans and item descriptions, while comparing my results with the JRCLP historic catalogs—the Hebraica catalog and the Systematic Catalog of Latin script books which are all complete up to 1939. The search for Nazi-looted prints is a very time-consuming and unpredictable job. Sometimes simple luck leads me to the prints of JRCLP provenance within a few minutes. Most of the time, however, it takes hours and days of searching, often without results. Thus, the process involves periods of frustration that must be overcome by persistence. When looking for books I go through thousands and thousands of scans. To do this work successfully, it is therefore imperative to develop the ability to scan several images in a very brief glance. (Personal communication, April 6, 2022)

The Museum has enjoyed some major successes, including the discovery and repatriation of one of JRCLP’s rarest volumes, a Venetian edition of the Hebrew Bible, *Mikraot Gedolot*. Often called the Rabbinic Bible, it was published as a four-volume work by the eminent printer Daniel Bomberg between 1516 and 1517 (Bušek 2021) and was the first work printed by Bomberg containing the complete Hebrew Bible. The book had been incorporated into the Valmadonna Trust Library, an important and large private collection. Prior to the January 2017 sale of the entire collection to the National Library of Israel through the New York branch of Sotheby’s, the auction house contacted the museum with a request to identify the ownership stamp on the book. As it was a JRCLP Library stamp, the museum immediately asked for more information about the book and requested that it be withdrawn from the auction. The JMP substantiated the provenance using the library’s bound catalog record and information about the book written by Jakobovits. After several years of successful negotiations, the Rabbinical Bible finally returned home to Prague in the summer of 2021 (Bušek 2021).

Another rare book from the JRCLP library turned up at an auction held by Kestenbaum & Company in New York. The volume was a reprint of the first edition of *Mikne Avram—Peculium Abrae*, a Hebrew grammar book written by the Italian Jewish physician, philosopher, and translator Abraham ben Meir de Balmes (~1440–1523) and published by Daniel Bomberg in Venice in 1523. In addition to an ownership stamp, the book also contained a call number, which was substantiated with a record from the JRCLP’s bound catalog. The owner agreed to return it to the Prague Museum in 2017 stating that a refusal would be “an active continuity of those terrible thefts committed against Jewish property and cultural treasures perpetrated by the German Nazis.” (Janicek 2018).

So far, six books in the UCLA Library have been found with ownership stamps and accession numbers matching records in the prewar catalog of the JRCL in Prague. Five were identified using HathiTrust, and a sixth was found among a backlog of uncataloged material. The six books that were found and returned are:

1. *Sefer ha-shorashim ha-mekhuneh séfat emet* (The Book of Roots), Prague, 1803.
2. *Sefer yesod morh ye-sod Torah* (The Foundation of Awe and Secret of the Torah), Prague, 1833.
3. *Histoire des médecins juifs: anciens et modernes* (History of Jewish Physicians: Ancient and Modern), Brussels, 1844.
4. *Sefer teshuvat ha-ge'onim* (Responses of the Great Sages), Ungvar, Ukraine, 1865. Ungvar (Fig. 1)
5. *Index raisonné des livres de correspondance de feu*, by Samuel David Luzzatto, Padua, 1878.
6. *Teshuvot ketav sofer—Yoreh de'ah* (Responses on the work *Yoreh De'ah*), Bratislava (Pressburg), 1878/9.

HOW DID THE VOLUMES ARRIVE AT UCLA?

The Judaica collection in the UCLA Library was negligible when the Jewish studies program began in the 1950s, about forty years after the founding of the university. The library had to work fast to build a Judaica collection that could support the growing scholarship and curriculum needs. Major acquisition advances were made in the early and mid-1960s, particularly by the purchase of the entire inventory of the Bamberger & Wahrmann Bookstore in Jerusalem, which closed for business in 1963. That purchase of 33,500 volumes was initiated by Professor Arnold Band, verified by UCLA's first librarian for Jewish studies, Rabbi Shimeon Brisman, and enabled by a generous donation from the Theodore Cummings family of Beverly Hills (Seidenbaum 1963; Kohn 2008). One of the books returned to Prague, *Sefer teshuvat ha-ge'onim*, contains a Cummings Collection bookplate indicating that it was acquired in that key purchase, while its title page has the ownership stamp of the *Prager Israelitische Cultus-Gemeinde* (Figure 1).



Fig. 1. *Sefer teshuvat ha-ge'onim* (Ungvar, 1865), showing both the JRCLP ownership stamp (left) and the Cummings Collection bookplate at UCLA Library (right). Photo credit: UCLA Library

The UCLA accession numbers recorded on all six volumes in question are very close in proximity, ranging from 2079249 to 2114257, which leads us to believe that they were all acquired around the same time in the early and mid-1960s, and most likely from book dealers in Israel and North America.

REPATRIATION STEPS DEVELOPED BY UCLA

The steps the library used for verifying and returning the six volumes followed a process established during an earlier repatriation request. In 2019, UCLA's Norman and Armena Powell University Librarian Virginia Steel received an inquiry about a book in our collection from the Jewish community in Munich. Unable to find any professional literature or guidelines for academic libraries in North America, Steel consulted with her administration and unit heads including acquisitions, metadata services, conservation and preservation, and the Southern Regional Library Facility where the book was held. The UCLA Library then quietly returned the volume in question.

This time, we followed the same steps as set in the precedent above before returning the books to Prague:

- **Physical verification.** We checked the ownership stamps, accession numbers, and any other identifying marks to match those presented by the claimant.
- **Comparison to digital versions.** Each page of the physical texts was compared to its digitized version for completeness and legibility. We rescanned one item for greater clarity.
- **Digitization as needed.** We scanned and entered into HathiTrust the item that had not yet been scanned to ensure that scholars will have digital access.
- **Scarcity check.** Each item was searched in the WorldCat catalog to determine whether copies were held in other institutions.
- **Removal of physical volumes.** The books were removed from the collection. The catalog was updated to include the reason for removal and links to the electronic versions. Partners in our cooperative catalog system were notified.
- **Conservation and preservation checks.** Items were checked for damages and any repair requirements. We asked the Prague Museum administrators whether or not to remove UCLA Library property markings, and they requested that we leave them in. We believe this is important because inadvertent damage can occur during the erasure process, while the markings add to the books' own histories.
- **Return.** Shipping and insurance specifications were coordinated with Prague following guidelines for shipping rare material.

Figure 2 (next page) demonstrates how we physically verified the items in question. A page from the prewar catalog prepared by Jakobovits at the JRCLP, and provided to UCLA by Kohout, includes the entry for *Index raisonné des livres de correspondance de feu* by Samuel David Luzzatto with the accession number 7293. The title page of *Index raisonné*, as found in the UCLA Library has two Prague ownership stamps and the matching accession number. This documentation provided us with enough evidence of provenance to continue the repatriation process of this item.

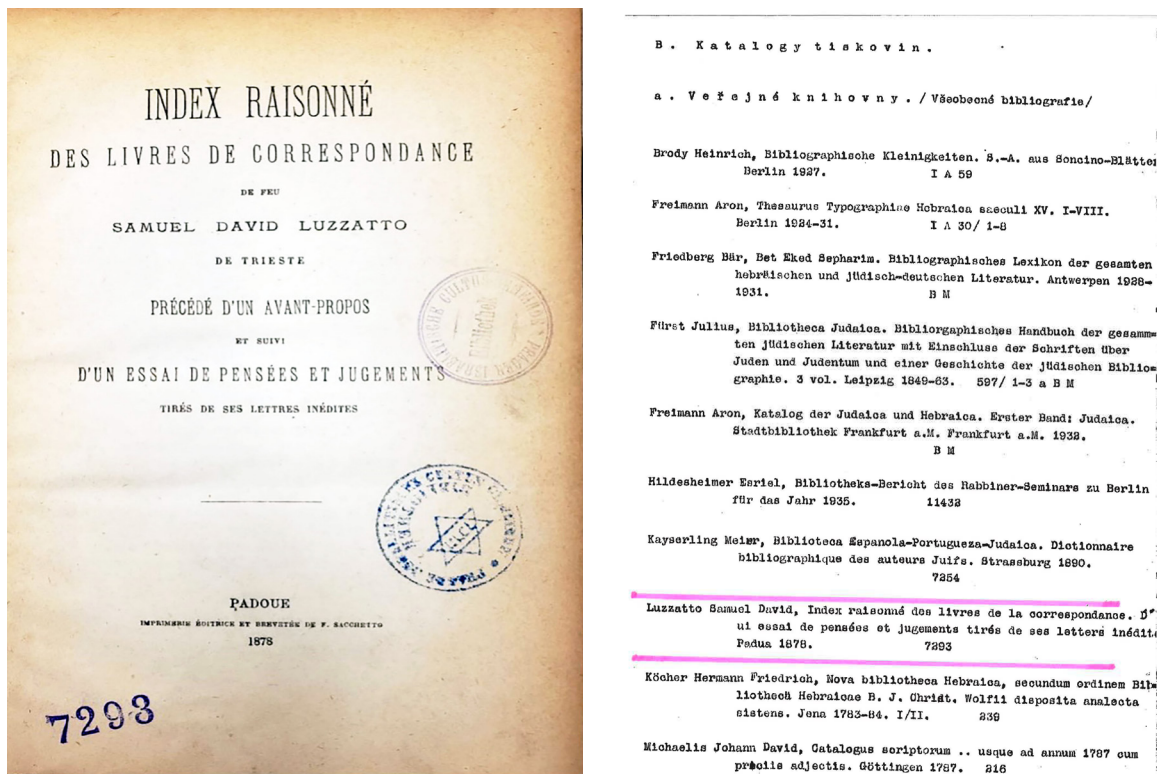


Fig. 2. Samuel David Luzzatto's *Index raisonné des livres de correspondance de feu* (Prague, 1803; title page), UCLA Library's copy with ownership stamps and JRCLP accession number #7293 (left); The JRCLP prewar catalog showing the matching number, p. 324 (right). Photo credit: UCLA Library#

PUBLICIZING THIS CASE

Unlike in 2019, when the UCLA Library quietly returned a book to the Jewish community in Munich, we decided this time that the issue of repatriating items of questionable provenance was too important to keep silent, especially if it could be determined that they were part of the plunder of war, colonialism, or imperialism. Museum curators, archivists, and legal specialists have been discussing the topic of restitution of looted artwork and cultural items for decades (see for example Barkan 2000; Prott 2009). Libraries in Germany, France, and other European nations have also publicized their efforts to uncover and return stolen material (Rydell 2017; Cazanove 2020). They have created databases such as Looted Cultural Assets (n.d) and The Rare Books of the Shimeon Brisman Collection in Jewish Studies (Digital Library Services, n.d.), both of which include records of property, book collections, and illustrations of ownership stamps, to assist researchers in their work and enable communication and collaborations. The Arbeitskreis Provenienzforschung eV, a European project based in Germany, “promotes the development of provenance research in all its fields of activity and in its interdisciplinary context” (Arbeitskreis Statute 2017). A subgroup, AG Judaica, “offers a professional exchange forum for specific questions about provenance research of. . . Jewish ritual and ceremonial objects . . . and written material (manuscripts, libraries, archival material)” (AG Judaica, n.d.). No discussion of provenance issues has yet been found among the professional literature of North American libraries, however, and it is time to change that.



Fig. 3. Symbolic handover event, May 11, 2022. Czech Consul General Amb. Jaroslav Olša, Jr. (center), UCLA University Librarian Virginia Steel (right), and librarian Diane Mizrachi (left). Photo credit: UCLA Library

Stimulated by our experience with the Prague Museum, the UCLA Library took several actions to raise awareness of Nazi-looted books and other material of questionable provenance in academic libraries such as photographs or diaries of indigenous or enslaved people, or archives and papers of members of communities ransacked by revolution and war. Our activities include:

- A “handover” event at the library in which the Czech General Consul in Los Angeles was symbolically presented with the six books from Prague (Figure 3). The event was highlighted by a video clip of the curators at the Prague Museum and remarks from representatives of the Israeli Consulate.
- A report of the handover event to the public through social media and the library and UCLA campus news outlets (e.g, Alkaly 2022).
- An online exhibit detailing the stories of the books from Prague and their return (Tanhayi Ahari et al. 2022).
- A four-part virtual symposium titled *Contested Collections: Grappling with History and Forging Pathways for Repatriation*.⁴ A total of 265 participants attended the first session, which discussed Nazi-looted books and the JRCLP case specifically, and as of October 26, 2022, YouTube shows 288 views of the recorded session.⁵ The other sessions broadened the conversation to address colonial histories and indigenous people’s sovereignty over their cultural items. A total of 735 participants attended all four live sessions, and, as of October 26, 2022, the total views on YouTube are 1,138.

4. <https://bit.ly/uclal-symposium>.

5. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drW9cY0J--I&t=6s>.

- Planned articles in academic journals (e.g., Mizrahi 2023) and proposals for upcoming conference presentations.
- A poster displaying property stamps to be distributed among units throughout the UCLA library system.

MOVING FORWARD

This flurry of activity generated immediate responses from Judaica librarians in the United States, Germany, and Israel, who are also grappling with provenance issues. They all expressed gratitude that the topic is finally being discussed outside of Europe and hope that English-language institutions can join their European and Israeli colleagues in sharing, communicating, and working together towards coordinated decisions and understandings. In replies to an inquiry about repatriation sent to the Academic Judaica Libraries listserv (CARLJS) in December 2021, several members agreed that there is great interest in the topic and an obvious need for dialog worldwide.

Some collaborative steps are being taken more broadly. The International Forum on Judaica Provenance is a recent initiative by the National Library of Israel and the Association of Jewish Libraries that seeks to develop a white paper of recommendations (Personal conversation with AJL President Michelle Margolis and Yoel Finkelman of National Library of Israel, April 27, 2022). Members include 13 curators and scholars from the fields of art, Holocaust reparation law, Jewish history, and librarians in seven countries. Their recommendations for acquisitions and provenance research could serve as a model for other communities.

Nevertheless, Judaica librarians in academic institutions need their own forum to discuss the issues they are facing today, and to find practical solutions that go beyond the theoretical. It has become apparent that there is no single answer or model for all repatriation questions and all institutions. In each case, consideration must be given to unique contexts and circumstances before deciding on final actions. For example, UCLA was satisfied that the Jewish Religious Community Library in Prague, under the auspices of the Jewish Museum, is the rightful owner of the six books in question. The Museum and Library continue their original mission of serving researchers and the public. We did not, however, consult with legal experts on this issue. All six books clearly showed the Prague ownership stamps and accession numbers, and no dissension was expressed among staff or administrators. UCLA is a large, well-known public institution. Returning the items demonstrated our commitment to restitution as part of the larger goal to decolonize our collections, especially by recognizing that these items were taken from their owners without consent. Publicizing our return of the looted items not only helped raise awareness of the topic but also generated positive public and community relations and interest.

Other cases may not be as straightforward. A librarian at a private institution, who wishes to remain anonymous, told me that there is some resistance to physical restitution among some li-

brary and archive administrators or their boards, especially of volumes purchased in good faith. As current Jewish communities and institutions in Europe grow and build their libraries, claims of inheritance to prewar collections may be legally questionable. Some European institutions and yeshivas relocated during the war or have since been reestablished elsewhere. Do they have valid legal claims to prewar collections? And is it correct to return items to their original countries when the original institutions no longer exist or when current political circumstances, such as those in Ukraine in 2022, might endanger a physical collection or prohibit access to scholarship?

There are ways to address repatriation issues other than the physical return of items. Sometimes the original owners of material (or their descendants) are notified that their property has been discovered in a library. Rather than requesting their return, some agree to leave the material in place, provided that proper notation of provenance is recorded in the catalog record. Others request that the items be donated to an institution of their choice. Thus, scholars and others retain access to the items, the items are curated by professionals, and the original owners' stories are not lost but become part of a living record.

The Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums operated in Berlin from 1872 to 1942, and its library held approximately 60,000 titles by the time it was confiscated by the Nazis. After the war, whatever had not been destroyed was dispersed among libraries throughout the world. Today, the Leo Baeck Institute in Jerusalem, part of network dedicated to the study of German Jewish history and culture, plans to reconstruct the Hochschule library not through physical restitution but digitally. The institute plans to ask owners of Hochschule material to contribute metadata of the titles they hold, including their physical locations and, ultimately, links to digitized versions. A master catalog of the collection would thus be created and publicly available. Scholars could find and use the digitized collection from anywhere in the world or locate the physical copy of a particular item to conduct their research on site (Personal conversation with Bettina Farack, Leo Baeck Institute Jerusalem, June 9, 2022).

This example of the digital reconstruction of a dispersed collection with its own public catalog could serve as a model for the reconstruction of other historic collections. Libraries could keep the physical volumes while still promoting discovery and advancing scholarship worldwide, especially when physical repatriation is not feasible or is legally questionable. Through dialog and communication among Judaica librarians, other models may be developed and adapted to suit other kinds of circumstances.

Collaborative efforts have already produced databases that aid provenance research, such as those referenced above. Another idea in the early stages is a “Book Ownership Stamp” app for smartphones similar to birding identification apps for mobile devices (personal conversation with Bettina Farack, Leo Baeck Institute, Jerusalem, June 9, 2022). Birding apps aid the identification of bird species. The user submits a picture of the bird in question and the app identifies or presents possible identifications of the species. Such an app for ownership stamps and other markings would greatly advance provenance research.

At a minimal level, all libraries should include notes of provenance in their catalog records. When was a unique item purchased? From whom? What markings, signatures, ownership stamps are found in it? Such documentation would ease the research of historical collections for scholars wading through library catalogs and add to the library's institutional knowledge for its own sake.

The clearest conclusion from our experience is that an international English-language forum for questions relating to materials of questionable provenance in academic and institutional libraries must be established to promote awareness, dialog, collaboration, and, most important, to inspire actions that help rectify a horrible historic injustice.

SOURCES

Alkaly, Ben. 2022. *Digitization, Open Access and the Internet Aid: UCLA's Return of Books Looted by Nazis*. May 12, 2022. <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/repatriation-jewish-books-contested-collections>.

Arbeitskreis Provenienz Forschung. 2017. *Statute*. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://www.arbeitskreis-provenienzforschung.org/ueber-den-arbeitskreis/satzung/>.

AG Judaica. n.d. *AG Judaica and Everyday Objects from a Jewish Context*. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://www.arbeitskreis-provenienzforschung.org/arbeitsgruppen/ag-judaica-und-alltagsgegenstaende-aus-juedischem-kontext/>.

Barkan, Elazar. 2000. *The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*. 1st ed. New York: Norton.

Bušek, Michal. 2007. *Hope Is on the Next Page: 100 Years of the Library of the Jewish Museum in Prague*. Prague: Jewish Museum.

———. 2021. 'Rabínská bible opět v Praze. O návratu vzácného tisku z předválečné knihovny pražské obce' [The Rabbinic Bible Back in Prague: On the Return of a Rare Printed Book from the Prewar Library of the Prague Community], *Roš Chodeš. Věstník židovských náboženských obcí v českých zemích a na Slovensku* [Bulletin of the Jewish Religious Communities in the Czech Lands and Slovakia] 83 (11): 10f.

Cazanove, Marion. 2020. "Des livres spoliés par milliers dans les bibliothèques Françaises." *Slate.fr*. December 28, 2020. <http://www.slate.fr/story/198541/spoliation-livres-juifs-nazis-caches-bibliotheques-francaises-seconde-guerre-mondiale>.

Friedman, Philip, and Ada June Friedman. 1980. *Roads to Extinction: Essays on the Holocaust*, with an Introd. by Salo Wittmayer Baron. 1st ed. New York: Conference on Jewish Social Studies.

- Gallas, Elizabeth. 2019. *A Mortuary of Books: The Rescue of Jewish Culture after the Holocaust*; Translated by Alex Skinner. New York: New York University Press.
- Glickman, Mark. 2016. *Stolen Words: The Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society.
- Gottheil, Richard, and Csapar Levias. Nd. “Makre Dardeke.” *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Accessed June 16, 2022. <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10316-makre-dardeke>.
- Janicek, Karel. 2018. “Hebrew Grammar Book from 16th Century Returns to Prague,” *The Times of Israel*. January 16, 2018. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hebrew-grammar-book-from-16th-century-returns-to-prague/>.
- Kohn, Roger S. 2008. “No Disneyland: Biography and Bibliography of Rabbi Shimeon Brisman (1920-2004).” *Judaica Librarianship* 14: 57–79. <https://doi.org/10.14263/2330-2976.1074>.
- Knuth, Rebecca. 2003. *Libricide: The Regime-Sponsored Destruction of Books and Libraries in the Twentieth Century*. London: Praeger Press.
- Leff Moses, Lisa. 2018. *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Looted Cultural Assets Cooperative (LCA). n.d. *Looted Cultural Assets*. Accessed July 20, 2022. <https://www.lootedculturalassets.de/>.
- Lustig, Jason. 2017. “Who Are to Be the Successors of European Jewry? The Restitution of German Jewish Communal and Cultural Property.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 52 (3): 519–545. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009416647116>.
- . 2022. *A Time for Gathering: Archives and the Control of Jewish Culture*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Mizrachi, Diane. 2023. “Discovery and Recovery: Uncovering Nazi Looted Books in the UCLA Library and Repatriation Efforts.” *College & Research Libraries*. [In press].
- Ovenden, Richard. 2020. *Burning the Books: A History of Knowledge under Attack*. London, UK: John Murray.
- Prott, Lyndel V. 2009. *Witnesses to History: A Compendium of Documents and Writings on the Return of Cultural Objects*. Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

- Rabinowitz, Dan. 2019. *The Lost Library*. Waltham, Massachusetts: Brandeis University Press.
- Rydell, Anders. 2017. *The Book Thieves: The Nazi Looting of Europe's Libraries and the Race to Return a Literary Inheritance*. Translated by Henning Koch. New York, New York: Viking.
- Schidorsky, Dov. 1998. "Confiscation of Libraries and Assignments to Forced Labor: Two Documents of the Holocaust." *Libraries & Culture* 33 (4): 347–388. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25548663>.
- Seidenbaum, Art. 1963. "UCLA Acquires Rare Collection of 33,520 Hebrew, Judaic Books." *Los Angeles Times*. April 19, 1963.
- Tanhayi Ahari, Shannon, Jade Albuero, Gissel Rios, and Magaly Salas. 2022. *Rediscovered and Repatriated: UCLA Library's Return of Nazi-Looted Books*. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/ucla-library/index>.
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. 2022. "Book Burnings." Holocaust Encyclopedia. Accessed July 25, 2022. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/tags/en/tag/book-burning>.
- University of California System. 1964. *Libraries of the University of California*. eScholarship, University of California. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/77g9950w>.
- Washington University in St. Louis. n.d. The Rare Books of the Shimon Brisman Collection of Jewish Studies. Accessed July 20, 2022. <http://digital.wustl.edu/brisman/>.
- Waite, Robert G. 2002. "Returning Jewish Cultural Property: The Handling of Books Looted by the Nazis in the American Zone of Occupation, 1945 to 1952." *Libraries & Culture* 37 (3): 213–228. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25549010>.