

Workers' Libraries in Interwar Poland: Selections Translated from a Yiddish Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

The story of the *Hantbukh far bibliotekn*, by I. Rauchfleisch and L. Weiss (Warsaw: A. Shklyar, 1929),¹ begins in the *shtetlekh* of Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century, where small, personal book collections and modest institutional assemblages were cherished possessions. The rise of the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) and the slow breakdown of the structures of control in the *kehillah* (community) system created an atmosphere of possibility for the dissemination of literature and ideas otherwise shunned. Even a cursory inspection of *maskilic* narratives gives an indication of the clandestine networks for the sharing and promiscuous consumption of secular literature in all its forms. Indeed, as Ellen Kellman points out, into the beginning of the twentieth century “a youth culture revolving around autodidacticism flourished” (2003, 215). The notion of self-help through wide generalist reading is the seedbed for interwar Jewish librarianship.

The story comes into clearer focus following World War I, as the political left vied for the hearts and minds of the working classes and as communities rebuilt and reconstructed themselves in the aftermath of war and revolution. In many ways, it was an information age. A constant stream of printed material competed in the marketplace: newspapers of every political and cultural stripe, highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow periodicals, literature from sophisticated modernism to serialized “trash,” and publications on every conceivable practical and intellectual subject. The thirst was strong. Resources, however, were not evenly distributed, which meant that access was similarly skewed. Libraries stepped into this unbalanced field, often becoming “the central cultural institutions” in a community and catering to their sodalistic needs (Kellman, 217), by organizing events, reading groups, lectures, and even athletic games. By the 1930s, Poland was home to some 800 local libraries of one form or another (Estraikh 2015, 339).²

While some of those libraries were religious organizational libraries as well as private lending libraries, most catered to a public clientele. In Kellman’s useful list (2003, 227), we encounter

1. The handbook has been digitized by the Yiddish Book Center’s Spielberg Digital Yiddish Library and is available on the Internet Archive site: <https://archive.org/details/nybc214547/page/48/mode/2up>.

2. That many of these were spearheaded by women should come as no surprise, insofar as women and girls had a long history of being treated as non-threatening bearers of secular knowledge; being precluded from certain forms of traditional “higher” education, secular knowledge did not therefore “distract” them from worthier studies (Kellman 2003, 216–217).

the *efntlekhe bibliotek* (public library), access to which did not require membership in the sponsoring organization. Species of such a library included the *arbeter bibliotek* (workers' library), which was run by a political or labor organization, and the *gezelshaftlekhe bibliotek* (institutional library), run by non-political cultural organizations.

Very often libraries were not solely communal service institutions. They also served ideological ends. In the struggle between ideological rivals, libraries came to be seen as a contestable site for the hearts, minds, and sympathies of their users and desired constituencies, especially the demographically significant working classes (Kassow 1999, 194–195). The primary actors in this struggle in interwar Poland consisted most prominently of Communist and non-Communist groups. Among the latter, the most important players were the Kultur Lige (originally formed in Kiev and folded into the Bund after its move to Warsaw), the Bund, and the Linke Poale Tsiyon (Estraiikh 2015, 338; Kellman 2003, 223–230).

While libraries were contested sites, they were not organs of propaganda. Competing ideological groups uniformly saw their mission with regard to libraries as providing high-quality information in a professional atmosphere—their special bugbear was the lowbrow literature serialized in the tawdry press (Kellman, 226–227). When the Bundist activist Herman Kruk, for example, took over as director of the Grosser Library in Warsaw—where he “quickly made it the largest and most popular workers' library in Warsaw” (Kassow 1999, 195), indeed perhaps the “most important of all workers' libraries in the country”—“Kruk and his colleagues employed modern librarianship and coordinated some 400 (i.e., about a half of all) Jewish libraries in towns around the country” (Estraiikh 2015, 339).

Hantbukh far bibliotekn (Handbook for Libraries) represents a sober attempt to provide the vast network of Jewish libraries across Poland with a template for a modern library up to the highest professional standards. Published under the aegis of the Linke Poale Tsiyon and its adult-education arm, the *Ovnt-kursn far arbeter* (Evening Courses for Workers), the book may well have been patterned on the 1914 *Handbuch für Arbeiterbibliothekare* (Handbook for Workers' Librarians) by Joseph Luitpold Stern, the Austrian-Jewish poet and educational activist who was deeply committed to the workers' libraries in Vienna (Gruber 1991, 194–195). Authored by Y. Roykhfleysh (I. Rauchfleisch, about whom I regrettably could not find any information) and the autodidact librarian Eliezer Vays (L. Weiss, 1903–1930), the handbook is both an ideological and a practical document. It lays out the crisis of professional librarianship in Jewish libraries across Poland, and not only argues why the defects need to be remedied but also suggests how that is to be accomplished in very specific, concrete, and even technical ways. Again, in Kellman's words (2003, 231–232), “However haphazard the education of working-class Jewish autodidacts might have been, they could claim impressive accomplishments. Why, then, not set out to train a cadre of socialist teacher-librarians through evening courses and instructional guides?” Why not indeed!

Many aspects of the book seem dated or even quaint to us today. What one comes away with, however, is an appreciation for the deep earnestness of the project. “The library must become a holy possession of all workers,” the authors state unequivocally. “No one can be left outside it! The great historical events awaiting us dictate the relentless, merciless struggle that needs to be waged among the ranks of the masses, especially amongst the workers, against ignorance and illiteracy. The Jewish workers’ libraries must play a prominent role in that struggle and thus must be properly prepared” (Handbook, 7–8). A rhetorical excess perhaps. But there is no exaggeration of the energy expended on the organization and dissemination of information and the real impact it was meant to have on the everyday lives of the libraries’ users and, indeed, on the world.

The handbook is a 73-page document intended chiefly for anyone who desired to establish and operate a worker’s library in Poland. It offered up-to-date methods of modern librarianship in accessible language, with clear, easy-to-follow, and practical instructions. The contents are as follows:

1. Our Libraries
2. The Duties of the Librarian
3. Location and Facilities
4. Book Acquisitions
5. Bookbinding
6. Book Conservation
7. Organization of the Books
8. Inventory Ledger and Borrowing Card
9. Reader Catalog
10. Identification, Reader Cards, Regulations, Recall Notices
11. Library Statistics
12. Accounting
13. Library Notifications
14. How to Legalize the Libraries?

The following translation is a selection of chapters and sections of greatest interest to a contemporary reader. I have translated chapters 1–4, 7–9, 11, and 13. All of these are complete except chapters 9 and 11, which are excerpts from longer chapters that contain sample forms, surveys, and statistical data sheets of limited modern interest except in the most technical sense. The final chapter includes a lengthy template (65–71) in Polish for incorporating and organizing a workers’ library of one’s own.

SOURCES

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HANṬBUKH FAR BIBLYOTEḲN, BY I. RAUCHFLEISCH AND DR. L. WEISS. WARSAW: A. SHḲLYAR, 1929
SELECTIONS TRANSLATED BY JORDAN FINKIN

1. OUR LIBRARIES

When the cultural historian of the future writes the history of secular Jewish culture, he will doubtless dwell on the important role the workers’ libraries played in its development.

These institutions, which shine light and knowledge into the secluded corners of the lives of the Jewish masses, were constructed by the masses themselves.

It did not come easily. Enemies within and without lay in wait to prey on the soul of the Jewish working people. Previously, the Tsarist reactionaries had seen in the new educational institutions cells of independent action and organization for the struggle against their authority. Later, their heirs in independent Poland often employed the same methods of oppression on the awakening working class. No better today is our domestic Black Hundred,³ which understands that the education of the worker is endangered by the dominion of the *shtreimel* [black hat] and the parasite...⁴

The Yiddish book was *treyf* [non-kosher]; the Yiddish language was spat upon and demeaned; every free thought was persecuted.

3. The Black Hundred were reactionary, antirevolutionary, and antisemitic groups that emerged in reaction to the Russian Revolution of 1905.

4. The authors allude here to Jewish orthodoxy who typically resisted the Haskalah.

Boulders were places as roadblocks in the struggle for the new culture. But the Jewish workers cleared them away and, with love and innumerable sacrifices, built cultural institutions forging new paths.

Today we stand witness to diversified cultural work among the Jewish masses. There is an extensive network of Jewish nursery schools, elementary and middle schools, evening classes and courses for adults, and several hundred workers' libraries.

No power will ever overcome such effort! The enemies of Jewish workers' culture, however, are still there. To this day the Yiddish language and the Yiddish book are persecuted. The Jewish school system has to endure so many persecutions and oppressions, and the libraries are burned down and destroyed in a medieval way.

All on his own the Jewish worker must think about the cultural institutions he himself has constructed. All on his own he must worry over their future development.

If the work has been only partially accomplished in the school arena, complete anarchy reigns in the library system. It is a fact that wherever the pulse of a Jewish worker's life beats, there is a library. They are created spontaneously; life is their mother. But there is no central authority⁵ involved in unifying all the diverse and geographically varied institutions. The libraries cannot gain a sense of their tasks. They lack organization. They have no concrete work plan nor do they know how to carry out the work. What, then, constitutes a workers' library today? A place for reading books and nothing more! What kind of books? What does reading those books look like? Who occupies himself with that? These questions will easily be answered by whomever has had even the slightest relation to a workers' library.

The answer is not a cheery one. You see so much youthful energy in library work going to waste, and all because the route is missing, the path along which a workers' library should travel. Moreover, the inner organization is also lacking. The true face of the modern workers' library has gotten lost. In this respect it is indistinguishable from a bourgeois library. The whole enterprise involves lending books and nothing more.

You must not forget that the majority of our readers have not been to school. For them one first needs to awaken an interest in books. It is not enough to make obtaining a book easier. Rather, our readers need to be shown the book, and instructed how to read and understand it. Who should do this? The librarian who often has less knowledge than the reader? It is no wonder that the number of library members in a given place is minimal compared to its total number of workers.

5. At the cultural conference convened by the Society "Evening Courses for Workers" (Warsaw), a central library secretariat was established. (This footnote appeared in the original book.)

The situation needs radical change. It must be repeated: the goal of a workers' library is the *extension of knowledge and education to the widest circles of workers*. This can be achieved only when the internal organization of the library is healthy and when at the summit of the library stands a person who knows his duties and is capable of being the cultural leader of the workers.

The library must become a holy possession of all workers. No one can be left outside it! The great historical events awaiting us dictate the relentless, merciless struggle that needs to be waged among the ranks of the masses, especially amongst the workers, against ignorance and illiteracy. The Jewish workers' libraries must play a prominent role in that struggle and thus must be properly prepared.

2. THE DUTIES OF THE LIBRARIAN

As we write the present chapter, we have come to understand that in a full 100 percent of our workers' libraries there are librarians who have no specialized training in their difficult and responsible functions. It is no secret that until now there were no opportunities to receive training for these positions. Are we then entitled from now on to be satisfied with this state of affairs? Everyone will admit that such a situation is quite abnormal—a librarian who does not know his duties and cannot adjust to the goals set for a workers' library is of no use to the library. And if he is of no use, he has failed. It is equally a misfortune when an institution's balance sheet demonstrates that during its recording year it has purchased such-and-such many books. With that sum of capital one can scarcely create any new cultural values. That is when one receives a minus in the activity column. Everyone who is familiar with the activities of workers' libraries will agree that there are a great many flaws. One often discerns not even a sign of healthy and productive work.

The key to the reform of the workers' libraries lies first and foremost in the hands of the librarian. He is the *spiritus movens*—the “motive spirit”—of the library, its motor, its driving force. He is the officer in the army who fights for the sake of knowledge. Who else but the Jewish worker is in need of precisely such fine and tested officers?

In Western Europe and now in the Soviet Union, people have long understood the role and importance of workers' libraries.

In our social order, for well-known reasons we could not expect any help in this area. The ruling classes are exceedingly invested in preserving the unconsciousness of the working class. They know that knowledge is power, that the consciousness of the working class is the death blow to capitalism. Thus, the workers themselves must organize their cultural institutions.

The Jewish workers' organizations have not lagged too far behind, but they have also not brought the work to the required result.

Libraries were created, but no effort was made to produce librarians, leaders of the libraries. Nor were there even any work plans for the libraries themselves.

In Western Europe, with the help of special librarians' institutions, courses, journals, handbooks, and instructors, they have educated and trained the necessary number of people who can take up the administration of the library.

The idea that the librarian is merely the one who performs the technical functions of supplying and distributing books has disappeared. He has become *the teacher, the educator, and the guide for the reader*.

Among us, the activities of the librarian are still restricted to these just-mentioned technical functions.

The Jewish worker-reader who has not been to school knows neither what to read nor how, and regrettably finds in the library staff book-lending machines.

These technical functions can be performed by anyone, without any specialized training, without any qualifications.

Exactly as in school, so too in the library—a *librarian* must be a *teacher*. *He must be in constant contact with the reader*, knowing each one's level of knowledge and intellectual development. With instructions, observations, and clarifying explanations he needs to lead the reader down the simple, well-panned path to benefiting from the books, awakening in him an understanding of that branch of knowledge to which he is passively oriented.

In his role, the librarian must not be a "bigwig," looking down on the reader. Rather he must, with a kind, friendly attitude and with honesty, look to winning the sympathy and trust of the readers. Speaking individually with the reader before taking back a book must take on a genuinely friendly character.

The subject of that conversation? The book that the reader has returned and one that is newly recommended.

However, apart from such individual conversations, collective discussions with the readers on various general and specific subjects should be organized at least once a week.

Without any school education, the reader is not cognizant of literary studies, does not know what is a drama or what is a comedy, is unaware of the difference between prose and poetry. Not to mention more general literary problems and trends.

And what about history? Jurisprudence? Philosophy? Natural sciences? Does the Jewish worker know what to say about these? True, in a discussion he will use every possible “ism” and “ology.” But this is nothing but pernicious phraseology and verbiage, verbal playacting.

The task of the librarian is therefore to come to the aid of the reader in all of this in a methodical way.

Of course, it is difficult to find a person expert in all of the scholarly areas mentioned as well as those not mentioned. The librarian must as a result make use of the assistance of other local cultural leaders in order to resolve all those questions in areas in which he has no training. Yet in this regard he must be the leader, the guide.

Apart from this educational work, the librarian must always consider the internal structure of the library, its organization.

Only with a solid internal organization and with well-planned and productive external work can a library bring about its desired results.

The conclusion:

The librarian is the faithful mediator between the book and the reader. His responsibilities are:

1. Selecting the most appropriate books for the library.
2. Arranging and cataloging the books.
3. Giving the reader instructions regarding reading and self-education.
4. By means of conversations, groups, presentations, lectures, etc., expanding the horizon of thought and contemplation amongst the readers.
5. Awakening in the readers an interest in various branches of knowledge.
6. Collecting the necessary statistical material and periodically evaluating it.

The librarian is assisted by colleagues in both the distribution and collection of books. The remaining library functions are carried out by the secretary and the treasurer.

It sounds like a utopia: under today’s conditions, having well-trained librarians in a workers’ library. Where will they come from? This is a rather difficult question. The various cultural and

political organizations—whatever they may be called and under whatever influence they may be found—have not moved a finger in this area. The duty of the libraries and their members is to storm these organizations and demand, even over the heads of their stubborn directors, that a real library-center be established that will immediately undertake the creation of librarian-training courses (not merely the convening and counting of delegates!), publishing bulletins, journals, handbooks, etc. Then our words will stop sounding utopian. The will of the individual libraries and of the mass of readers exists. We need only be given the word!



3. LOCATION AND FACILITIES

A well-considered library location is one of those factors that enables the development of the library. It must not, therefore, be disregarded.

It is difficult to describe a generic “recipe” for a library location. A great deal actually depends on taste and material possibilities. But we shall attempt to sketch an outline for a library location in its most minimal form.

The location of a library, chosen with broadly diversified cultural work in view, will consist at a minimum of two rooms. (Incidentally, our plan envisions every workers’ library having a reading room.)

The external appearance of the location should be simple but aesthetically pleasing. The walls painted neatly, even simply whitewashed, decorated with portraits of our poets and philosophers, but not too many pictures so that the decorative aspect will not lose its specific flavor. The lighting should naturally be electric as much as possible. The appearance of the library should inspire in the reader the feeling of a holiday and a greater respect for the library.

A dirty, cramped, poorly lit location puts the reader off, offering no contrast to his home, workshop, factory, etc., where he spends the majority of his time.

No other institutions should be housed in the library because that would disturb the tranquil work of the library.

One room of the location is to be reserved for the library in the narrow sense, that is, for the bookcases, the librarian, and the actual exchange of books. The second room for the reading room, catalogs, reference books, and simultaneously for the conference room for the abovementioned conversations between the librarian and readers to take place.

In the first room are therefore to be found: wide, shallow, and not overly tall bookcases. They are to be arranged on one side of the room and separated from the rest of the space with a barrier so that the reader will not be disturbed by books being checked out. The division of the space needs to be in proportion to the number of readers and the size of the library. Care thus needs to be taken to make sure that access to the second room not be impeded.

The librarian is to be found beyond the barrier, seated at a desk, in an area where readers can gather.

The second room, the so-called library reading room, is intended solely for the reader. Here are to be found a sufficient number of tables—a common table is not desirable—and chairs, each table having a lamp, pens, and an inkwell.

In a designated bookcase will be the reference books, which do not need to be paged from the library, and are absolutely necessary for the reader, viz., encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, etc. And alongside those—the catalogs.

It remains to be noted that the reading room should also display the newspapers and journals.

An assistant librarian should be found in the reading room to maintain calm and order during reading.

Announcements, rules, etc., will be posted on a blackboard stationed in a visually prominent location.

Existing libraries function under the most difficult local conditions. A library can often be found in the corner of some other institution, which will take a stepmotherly attitude toward it. No productive work can take place under such conditions. Existing library administrations must make every effort to create a home for the library. In any event, existing locations must conform to the minimum standards which we have broadly sketched above.

The goal must be: creating out of the library space a holy place for the reading public.

4. BOOK ACQUISITIONS

Until now book acquisitions have been chaotic, with neither plan nor order. The sole criterion for a good or bad book was price. The logic of acquisition consisted of the librarian trying to get the greatest number of books for the lowest sum of money. He forgot that not every book is suitable for a workers' library and that not every published book has literary or scholarly value.

The blame for this situation does not fall on today's librarian. We cannot demand more from him. He, too, is overworked. He cannot be expected to be smarter than the existing uninformative catalogs and book notices put out by the publishers. There is no bibliography and certainly no other reference books. The question arises: What is a librarian to do, out in some isolated little town, disconnected from any cultural center, when, through hard work and toil, he has cobbled together a few zlotys to buy some books but he does not know what to buy? He must decide: either rely on the opinion of the booksellers (publishers), or "orient" himself according to the advertisements in the newspapers. You cannot estimate how "great" the utility the worker-reader will derive from books acquired in this way.

In Western Europe, and now in the Soviet Union, after the radical reorganization of librarianship, the abovementioned question has been resolved in a very simple way.

For example, in Austria there is a central office for book acquisitions, and every workers' library is obligated to purchase their books through that office. The central office knows the book inventory of every individual library as well as the level of cultural attainment of its members. In this way, incidentally, it also knows what books they need to buy more of.

Meanwhile, we have no such institution. Every individual library must therefore consider its own book acquisitions. How? A couple of observations on this point:

A workers' library needs to hold that quantity of books most useful for satisfying every desire of the readers. One must conduct an accurate audit of the existing books, remove the unnecessary ones that take up open space in the library, and replace them with those books that must absolutely be there. We realize that not every librarian will be capable of undertaking such a task, but through goodwill and earnest labor one can, in this regard, call upon local cultural activists and teachers for instruction and advice.

In general, one ought to remember that in a workers' library there needs to be a sufficient number of books on:

1. the social sciences (socialism, jurisprudence, world and cultural history, Jewish history, philosophy, etc.);
2. the natural sciences;
3. belles lettres;
4. literature for young people.

The number of books in each group needs to be found in a particular proportion. The reader's desires are not merely to be resolved, because the librarian—who stands above the reader—needs to awaken the reader's interest in those branches of knowledge that are absolutely necessary to

every person. For example, one will notice that many readers exhibit little interest in history, the natural sciences, and the social sciences. It is the job of the librarian to interest the reader appropriately in these subjects.

It is an erroneous opinion that as soon as you open a library you need first of all to acquire complete sets of different authors' works (for example, Mendele Mokher Seforim, Peretz, etc.). With small financial means you ought only buy the most important works of each author. In this way the library does not achieve a one-sided character but rather a diverse one.

Each library needs to be in constant contact with the publishers, to receive catalogs and bibliographic publications. The librarian is to maintain a special list of newly published books and, understanding which of those books are important for the library, he will endeavor to obtain them for the library.

It must be a duty of each library to acquire newly published books. In addition to the fact that this fulfills the general duty toward culture, it also enables the publication of Jewish books, simultaneously infusing more vitality into the library.

New books—that is the fresh blood that revives not only the librarian but also the reader. For such a library esteem grows.

7. ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOKS

In any activity you must consider how the least effort may achieve the greatest result. That is also the case for the work of the library. How much unproductive time does the librarian waste looking for a book of a specific type amongst the numerous volumes at the request of a reader. “Give me a scientific book”—and the librarian must rifle through a dozen books before he can fulfill the request. This is because in the majority of libraries the books are not arranged according to any plan but are all jumbled together.

The question arises: How should the books be arranged on the shelves?

The books should be classified into four general categories:

1. social sciences;
2. natural sciences;
3. belles lettres;
4. juvenile literature and children's literature.⁶

6. If there are no such books then do not create a grouping for them.

For each category we have in mind not only Yiddish books. Since the library holds books in foreign languages, one needs to create similar sections for those books, too. Dividing the foreign language books into particular groups according to their languages is not advisable because there are so few books for each foreign language in the workers' libraries.

Once the general categories have been created, provide each book with a shelfmark (a mark and a number). There are various systems for marking the books, but we will only consider the *Zero System*. According to this system one differentiates books of the various groups by the number of zeros found before the first definite digit. For example, if we take our general categorization, we would achieve the following result: the first book—let's take the social sciences—would be given the number 01, the second 02, and so forth, until, let's say, 01000, which would mean we had a group of no more than 1,000 books. If in the second group—natural sciences—we had 805 books, then we would assign the numbers such that there would be two zeroes before the first definite digit. Again we start with 1 and achieve a range of 001 to 00805. The third group—belles lettres—we assign three zeroes: from 0001 to 0001286 (assuming we have 1,286 books in that group). The fourth group we would assign no zeros: from 1 to 743 (there being 743 books in that group). As we can see, the book's mark shows us to which general category it belongs by the number of zeroes. As soon as the librarian sees the shelfmark he knows exactly which group of books he needs to search for the desired book.

This system has a special value for library statistics.⁷

Certain changes might be introduced into this book designation system in our libraries. Misunderstanding will doubtless arise in the writing of a shelfmark. One zero more or one zero less. Naturally that would interfere with the work. Thus, instead of the zeros we will add to each number the first letter of the general category: "ס" for social sciences; "נ" for natural sciences; "ב" for belles lettres; and for youth and children's literature we'll add no letter. Each general category will be numbered from 1 onward such that the books will be marked as follows:

First general category (Social Sciences): ס1, ס2, ס3, etc.

Second general category (Natural Sciences): נ1, נ2, נ3, etc.

Third general category (Belles Lettres): ב1, ב2, ב3, etc.

Fourth general category (Youth and Children's Literature): 1, 2, 3, etc.

Right away we would like to note: if a work consists of several volumes, then each volume will receive the same shelfmark under which will be written the number of the volume in Roman numerals. For example, Sholem Aleichem's *Funem Yarid* has two volumes, so one would mark the books נ875/I and נ875/II. Now the question arises: Where do we get the numbers of the books? That's a matter for the inventory ledger, but more about that in a later chapter.

7. See chapter 11.

With regard to the foreign-language books, we will designate the general categories with the corresponding Latin letters: the first group is marked “S” (social sciences), the second group “N” (natural sciences), the third group “B” (belles lettres).

In this way, no mistakes will be introduced and the result will be the same.

Once the books have been grouped and assigned the appropriate shelfmarks, we undertake arranging them on the shelves. The Yiddish books together and the foreign-language books together. Each general category is organized according to its sequential numbers.

8. INVENTORY LEDGER AND BORROWING CARD

The inventory ledger is the mirror of the collection.

Every book is entered into the inventory ledger. It needs to contain the following rubrics: (1) call number; (2) author; (3) title; (4) volume; (5) part; (6) number of pages; (7) publisher; (8) city; (9) year; (10) value; (11) notes.

When a book arrives it is recorded according to the sequential number.

Immediately upon being registered in the inventory ledger a borrowing card is written up. The borrowing card is the book’s citizenship certificate.

Under the rubric “Reader Card” we write down the number of the patron’s library card, which gives us continual control of who has a particular book.

At the end of every year we can ascertain how many times a given book has been read and we will note that under the corresponding categories “Year” and “Number.” This is very important in order to understand the relationship of the readers to each individual book. If a book is used a great deal it is worth obtaining another copy. And conversely, if a book is less used, then the librarian knows he needs to look into the reasons for such a relationship to the book. The implications of this for statistical purposes will be the subject of a separate chapter.

Every borrowing card is found inside its book. When the librarian loans a book he takes the borrowing card, noting the library card number of the patron to whom the book is being lent as outlined above. The librarian then places the borrowing card in a special box where all of the borrowing cards are arranged according to call number.

When a book is returned, the librarian finds the corresponding borrowing card, crosses out the patron's library card number, and places the borrowing card back inside its book.

9. READER CATALOG

There is a fitting parallel between the reader catalog and a map. Just like a country without a map, so is a library without a catalog.

A bad catalog—that is a map which indicates incorrect places.

But a well-conceived, conscientious catalog, executed with its purposes constantly in mind, makes the accomplishment of the goal of a good library possible: *the right book to the right reader at the right time.*

There are various catalog systems. The most widely used catalog system is alphabetic. The books are recorded in the catalog alphabetically by author's name. Such a catalog, however, tells us almost nothing. Such a catalog merely gives you the possibility of finding a book after looking through all of the titles or only if we know the name of the author.

A good modification of the alphabetic system is the systematic subject catalog.

This catalog is divided into principal categories, then each principal category into subdivisions. Thus it is divided according to the branches of knowledge.

Our systematic catalog will be divided into four principal categories: (1) social sciences, (2) natural sciences, (3) belles lettres, and (4) youth and children's literature. These four principal categories will then be divided into subdivisions. For example, under social sciences we will have the following subdivisions: socialism, history of socialism, economics, Jewish economics, professional movements, cooperative movements, etc.

In every subdivision the books will be recorded alphabetically by author. If a library holds several books by the same author and those books belong to the same subdivision, then they are recorded alphabetically by title.

Alongside the name of the book, the call number also needs to be recorded (see chapter 7). We write the number on the lefthand side, after the title of the book.

The systematic catalog mostly suits our libraries because it gives the reader the possibility of

finding the desired book whether he knows the author and the title of the book or whether he is looking for a book on a certain subject with which he wishes to familiarize himself. Such a catalog orients the reader in a sea of names and titles and can to a certain extent stand in for the librarian in his important consultative work.

Such a catalog can be either in book form or in card form.

The book form is to a certain extent impractical because as a library grows it becomes difficult to record the newly acquired books and remove the lost books, especially when the catalog is printed. For this reason, for larger libraries—ones that have more than a thousand books—it is more sensible to introduce a card catalog.

The preparation of a card catalog consists of the same process for arranging both borrowing cards and catalog cards. All of the cards are placed in a drawer with an iron rod running through the bottom, which secures them from getting lost. The cards are organized alphabetically within their subdivision. On the outer side of the drawer one affixes a note indicating the subdivision and the alphabetical range for the books covered in that drawer. If some subdivisions have a great number of cards, that subdivision will be found in several drawers. If there are fewer books in particular subdivisions, then several subdivisions from one general category, or the whole general category itself, can be included in a single drawer. If there are fewer books in a general category then several groups, even all of them, can be found in one drawer. Subdivisions can be separated with thin colored cardboard on which is noted what group is found thereafter. A newly acquired book can very easily be introduced to the catalog by adding a catalog card in its proper place according to the category and subdivision and in alphabetical order.

The card catalog can be both alphabetical and systematic (subject).

It is clear that larger libraries can introduce the systematic catalog both in book form and in card form. When a library has both forms of catalog, the card catalog will be the one principally used by the librarian.

The catalog card will look like this:

Treat Your Books with Respect

Author	Title	Call Number	Volume	Part

At the beginning of the catalog—in book form—there needs to be a table of contents of the categories and their subdivisions used in the catalog.

Putting together a systematic catalog is often a complicated undertaking. Our as-yet-untrained librarian will find it especially difficult to determine the appropriate subdivision for a particular book. In this work he needs to be assisted by the local cultural activists, teachers, or library center.

There are other catalog systems, but they are what are required for larger libraries and are not well suited for our libraries. For that reason, we will not deal with them here.

11. STATISTICS

Of no small value is the collection of statistics on the library. The language of numbers will never lead us astray. It creates an honest picture of the life of the library. It will always indicate the path the library is on and in what direction it will possibly need to go. Therefore, a great deal of attention needs to be paid to the collection of library statistics.

We are, however, lagging far behind in this area. Few libraries collect such statistics. Our librarians apparently still don't understand the importance of such work. If a few librarians do collect statistics, they do so without a set plan, each library doing it in its own way. And the sum total of that work can in no way resolve all the questions achievable through library statistics.

Statistics have of late occupied a reputable place in scholarship. It is no longer merely an auxiliary to the other branches of knowledge, but a field in and of itself. The dead numbers have been brought to life and can tell us a great deal when the collection of statistics proceeds according to a given method. Uniformity is the most important thing. Not every library goes it alone, but all libraries should collect their materials according to a particular plan, which we will outline.

We divide up the collection into three groups: (1) readers; (2) books; (3) finances.

The first group will clarify who is using the library and the movement of the readers. The second group will clarify the composition and movement of the books. And the third group, the material foundation of the library.

First of all, the static composition of the library needs to be determined. Then we can investigate its dynamic development. Library statistics will involve determining: (1) the number of members, their age, sex, occupation, level of education, membership in unions or other organizations; (2) books being lent and books being returned, as well as the movement of every book; (3) the income and expenditures of the library.

The collection of these statistical data must take place precisely and regularly. We will consequently record these data daily, making use of: (1) questionnaires; (2) daily reports; (3) monthly reports; (4) canvasses of books being lent and books being returned; and (5) annual reports.

[What follows are detailed descriptions of each of these categories of data collection.]

13. LIBRARY NOTIFICATIONS

The librarian needs to bring to the readers' attention each problem, event, historical date, and in general everything that might be of interest to them.

He does this by means of library notifications, which he hangs on the blackboard.

In the "Notification" he indicates the subject as well as the literature on it to be found in the library.

For example:

The 17th of December, 1927, will be the tenth Jahrzeit of **Ber Borokhov**. Ber Borokhov was the teacher and leader of Poale Zion, the theoretician of Jewish socialism and the national question, a great Jewish scholar, and a most distinguished Yiddish philologist.

His most important works are:

- Number 1503. *Di regulierung fun der yidisher emigratsye un der emigratsye-kongres.*
- Number 1509. Poale Zion writings:
 - *Di klasn-interesn un di natsyonale frage.*
 - *Vos vil di Poale Tsiyen.*
 - *Undzer platform.*
- Number 1600. *Di yidishe arbiter-bavegung in tsifern.*
- Number 1231. *Di ekonomishe antviklung fun yidishn folk.*
- Number 784. *Der pinkes far shprakh un literatur.*

On Borokhov:

- Number 1757. Zerubovel, *Ber Borokhov—zayn lebn un shafn*. Vol. 1.

- Number 1245. *Yoysef, Ber Borokhovs lebn*
- Number 8070. *Unzer lebn; Proletarisher gedank*
- Number 1770. Zalmen Reyzen. *Leksikon far yidisher shprakh, literatur un prese Literarishe bleter* and articles in the newspapers and journals of the Poale Zion [Figure 1].

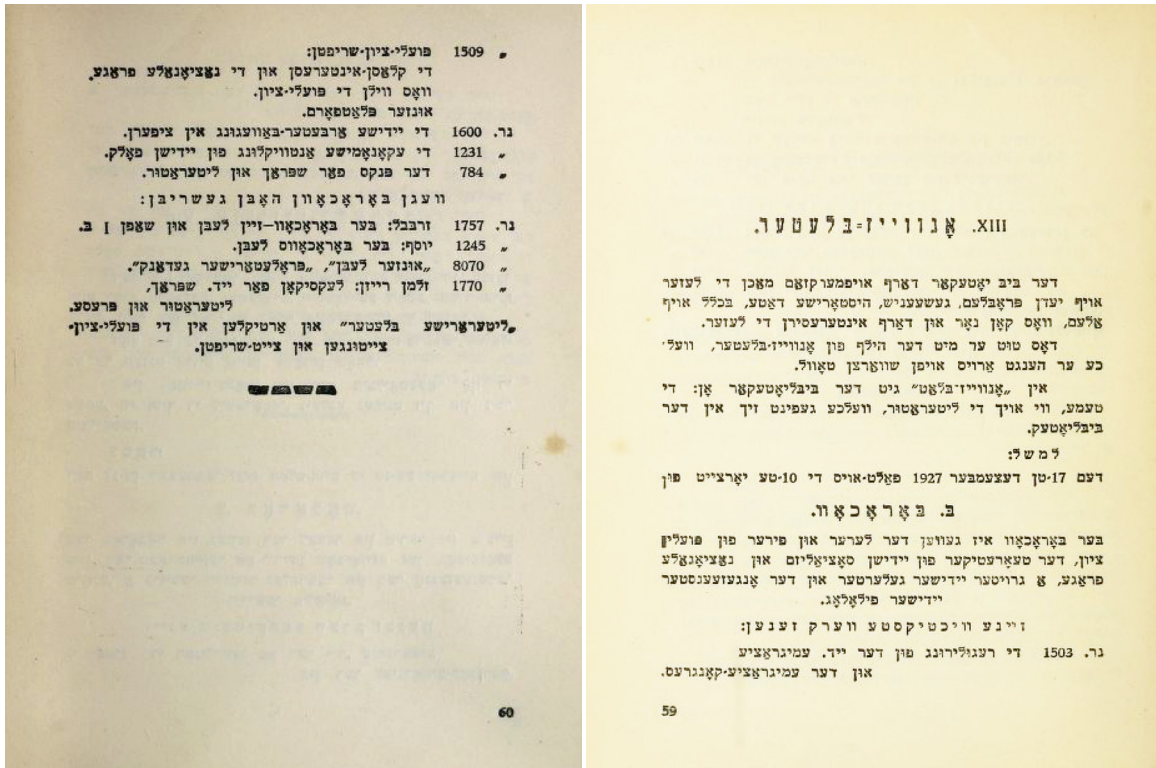


Fig. 1. Example for library notifications. I. Rauchfleisch and L. Weiss, *Hantbukh far biblyotekn*, 59–60. Warsaw: A. Shklyar, 1929