Book Review: Jason Lustig, *A Time to Gather: Archives and the Control of Jewish Culture*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. ix, 265 p. ISBN: 9780197563526

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Taking its title from a comment made by Cambridge historian Cecil Roth about Hebrew University of Jerusalem's postwar impulse to collect archival materials, Jason Lustig's book is a detailed, penetrating analysis of the role of archival collection and arrangement in shaping modern Jewish communal life in Germany, Israel, and America.

Lustig's introduction delineates the long global history of Jewish archiving, paying special attention to how the growth of various forms of institutionalized archiving can be linked to modernization processes. For example, archives supported eighteenth-century enlightened state bureaucracy as well as the fermentation of new nationalisms, or in Benedict Anderson's terms, "imagined communities" (1983) of collective identity in nineteenth-century Europe. Lustig also points to the role of record-keeping in Joseph II's Edict of Tolerance (1789) on the emancipation of the Galician Jews as well as to the role of archives in the founding of the Palestine Historical and Ethnographic Society in Jerusalem (1924–1925) and its relationship to the Zionist national project.

Lustig contextualizes his study within the history of the Holocaust. The Nazi persecution and mass murder of the Jews were accompanied by the destruction and plunder of the Jewish community's cultural assets. After the war, concerted and often competing efforts were made to reconstruct and restitute Jewish archival resources, particularly in the United States, Israel, and Western Europe—and after 1989, in Eastern Europe. In his study, which more broadly situates Jacques Derrida's theories of the archive "*within* history," Lustig (7) comments on Jewish cultural and communal archival loss throughout history that: "If documents serve as prostheses for individuals' memory, as Jacques Derrida reflected, then collecting and documenting history could replace lost limbs of the body politic" (4). In the face of upheavals within Jewish communities, such as migration and mass persecution, collecting offered a way of empathetically retrieving a vanished world, while archives provided an embodied, if sometimes melancholy, material trace of community identity.

Chapter one focuses on the personalities who brought about the first centralized, professionally managed Jewish archive: the Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden (Central Archive of the Jewish Communities in Germany) in Berlin (1903–1943), first imagined by Ezechiel Zivier in 1903. Operating just over thirty years after German unification and within the context of firm beliefs in the ability of Jews to integrate into the post-1871 state, founding director of the Gesamtarchiv or

"total archive" Eugen Täubler wanted to create a repository of historical documents that would represent all German Jewish communities. Lustig delineates how that mission became fraught with tensions: from challenges to its centralizing vision by the establishment of regional Jewish archives (e.g., in Breslau in 1924 and in Posen in 1925) to the radical subversion of its totalizing mission by the Third Reich in the 1930s and 1940s. In response to Nazi legislation such as the Nuremberg Laws (1935), the archive was increasingly used to document peoples' racial status, and in 1939 the archive was integrated into the Reichssippenamt, the Third Reich's department of racial research, thus becoming formally incorporated into the bureaucratic architecture of the control, expropriation, and destruction of Jewish life in Germany. On Berlin's Oranienburger Straβe, head archivist at the time Jacob Jacobsen was forced to translate Hebrew documents for the Third Reich, while painfully witnessing the round-up of his staff members for deportation to the East.[1] Jacobsen used his position to assist Jews in escaping from Germany and he also worked to save valuable historical documents before his own deportation to Theresienstadt in 1943.

The tragedy of the Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden formed the essential backdrop for postwar developments that focused on archival stakeholders scrutinizing the location of Jewish archives while often maintaining a commitment to their totalizing vision as part of political, national, and communal struggles over the direction of Jewish life after the Shoah. Archival collecting efforts in Israel and America, in particular, were facilitated by the American Zone's Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) and its cultural wing, Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR). Given the extremity of community and cultural destruction in Europe, Jewish leaders made the argument that if cultural property could not be returned to its owners, then it should be distributed to those states that had the commitment and resources to reconstruct Jewish cultural life. Representatives of Israeli archives made the case that they had the historical expertise, archival skills, and fluency in Hebrew to care best for the materials and to create a documentary memorial to destroyed Jewish communities. Supporting these arguments and making Israeli collections more comprehensive, JRSO and JCR agreed in 1949 that heirless communal and cultural property (for example, books and cultural objects) should be allocated to Israeli organizations in the first instance. Jerusalem's Jewish National and University Library (JNUL), now called the National Library of Israel, was the primary recipient of those items; if the JNUL already had copies of certain books in its holdings, then those heirless books would be redistributed to Jewish communities across Europe and the world.

Unlike books (which in modern times have often been designed to be reproducible commodities), archival materials are singular and rare. In November 1950, the JCR's Sub-Committee on Archival Material initially approved the request that restitutable Jewish archives be housed in the American Jewish Archives (AJA). However, JCR's board of directors reversed that decision, positing that restitutable Jewish archives should be sent to Israel. They believed that future scholars were more likely to congregate at the Hebrew University and that key documents could and should be microfilmed for the AJA in Cincinnati. In November 1951, the Jewish Trust Corporation in the British Zone also ruled that Israel should be the destination for restitutable archival

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1. The general term "staff-members" is used because the text implies that Jacobsen may have offered jobs to friends to try to save them from the Nazis (Lustig 2022, 46).

material. As a result, Israel's Jewish Historical General Archives (JHGA), now the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, became a key custodian of communal archives from Europe's destroyed Jewish communities.

In chapter two, Lustig documents these developments in Israel and the work of influential archivists such as Alex Bein. Bein had worked for the Central Zionist Archives and advised the JHGA before becoming Israel's first state archivist in March 1957. In the same year, which also marked the culmination of the collection of original files from approximately 800 former Jewish communities in Europe, Bein commented in his address to the inaugural meeting of the Israel Archives Association that, "…in the struggle with the Jewish and non-Jewish actors, we stand here on the principle that the successor of the communities destroyed in the Holocaust is the state of Israel, and in the state of Israel—the Jewish Historical General Archives" (Bein in Lustig 2022, 57). Through their spatial relocation then, those documentary records served as a symbolic historical anchor-point for the role of Israel in post-1948 Jewish futures. Moreover, in contrast to more commonly discussed instances of the establishment of remembrance cultures through monuments and museums, Lustig demonstrates how the process of archival collecting in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s had become an important part of Israel's memorialization of Europe's lost Jewish communities. In this way, Lustig's book unselfconsciously contributes to the historiography of Holocaust commemoration in the 1950s, led by researchers such as Roni Stauber (2007) and Boaz Cohen (2008). Stauber and Cohen challenged the notion that the 1950s were a period of repression or "silence" in relation to researching and remembering the Holocaust.

In chapter three, Lustig turns his attention to America and to Jacob Rader Marcus's inauguration of the AJA at Cincinnati's Hebrew Union College in 1947. Marcus, a rabbi, had started teaching Jewish history at the Reform rabbinical seminary in 1920 and was a European historian. Like Bein, he had spent time in Germany studying archival practice and learning the lessons of the Gesamtarchiv. Unlike Bein, Marcus articulated a vision for the American Jewish Archives: one that identified Cincinnati as the historic nucleus of Jewish life and culture in the United States (even as New York was increasingly seen as its major postwar American center). Marcus saw the Holocaust as extinguishing Europe's position as a dynamic Jewish center, and instead celebrated the historic role of the American diaspora, formulating the concept of "omniterritoriality," or the notion that boundless dispersal had supported Jewish survival throughout history. Marcus was unique in his approach to the collection of documents. He focused on the importance of microfilmed copies, as opposed to originals, and on the placement of documentary collections in networks of archives. Marcus's approach was infused by the Cold War context and the threat of nuclear annihilation. In 1951, he pronounced: "I am frightened at the possibility of an atomic war which would destroy old established depositories of invaluable source materials" (Marcus in Lustig 2022, 93). In this way, Lustig's book could be read productively alongside the research of academics such as Kirsten Fermaglich (2006), which has explored the symbolism of the Holocaust in the context of the Cold War and the American liberal imagination of the 1950s and early 1960s.

If chapters two and three explored the international relocation of surviving Jewish archives to ascendant nations supporting Jewish life and culture in the wake of the Holocaust, chapter four marks a return to post-1945 archival debates in Germany and moves towards a Jewish revival in the 1980s and 1990s. In this part of the book, Lustig presents regional case studies that show how influential local archivists advocated the retention of Jewish archives in postwar Germany. A notable example is the Jewish municipal archivist of Worms, Friedrich Illert, who had rescued Jewish files following their seizure by the Gestapo during World War II. After the war, Illert made the case that Worms should retain its Jewish archives because the Jewish community had played a key civic and religious role in the city's history. He also argued that historically Jews had always returned to Worms following cycles of assimilation and persecution. In 1949, a Mainz restitution court ruled in favor of Illert. By 1952, however, restitution in the French Zone of Germany had been allocated to the Jewish Trust Corporation's Branche française, which recognized the postwar custodial authority of Israel, as had the custodians in the American Zone. Following a heated meeting in Bonn among Illert, Israeli archivists, and Branche française in August 1956, the Worms Jewish archives were resettled in Jerusalem.

This chapter is particularly effective in highlighting the passionate debates that archives engender in the context of the legacies of mass murder and cultural destruction. Given the themes of Lustig's book, its findings could have been analyzed in more depth in relation to Raphael Lemkin's concept of cultural "genocide" or "vandalism" (Waller 2016, 7–8). Lemkin, a Polish Jewish legal expert, campaigned to have the crime of genocide incorporated into international law (1944, 79–95). His goal was achieved in 1948 when elements of Lemkin's definition of "genocide" were integrated into the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (ratified in 1951). Although the UN Genocide Convention recognized the targeting and destruction of national, racial, ethnic, and religious groups through mass killing and physical and mental harm, it omitted Lemkin's analysis of how groups could be subjected to intended destruction or "vandalism" of their cultural life by an oppressor (e.g., the destruction of historically, artistically, or religiously valuable documents, books, objects and/or monuments). The elements of *A Time to Gather* that relate to the Holocaust describe how complex restitution processes stepped in to adjudicate questions of future ownership raised by heirless Jewish communal and cultural property. An extended discussion of "cultural genocide" or "vandalism" would also have situated these debates within the context of the current limitations of international law in relation to the protection and prosecution of the willful destruction of the cultural life of groups (Bilsky and Klagsbrun 2018, 373–396).

The final chapter of *A Time to Gather* considers the opportunities opened up by digital technology to realize the monumental ambitions of archival totality (which is a recurring theme throughout) and to reunite scattered archives such as YIVO's Vilna Collections and the Cairo Genizah. Lustig analyzes the partnership underpinning the Center for Jewish History, in New York, which comprises the American Jewish Historical Society, the American Sephardi Foundation, the Leo Baeck Institute, the Yeshiva University Museum, and YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. That partnership has resulted in a global collection that can be searched through a single online catalog. The Leo Baeck Institute has gone even further by aiming to digitize the majority of its

collections through its DigiBaeck project. As intimated by Lustig, the pathways facilitated by digital technologies, such as data record linkage to reconnect scattered archives, are undoubtedly exciting opportunities for research, and education. However, in our digital drive for the total archive, particularly where cultural destruction, lost voices, silence, and absence have all played such a critical part in the history, registering the archive's fragmentary and incomplete nature also needs to be factored into the archivist's curatorial impulse. For example, an awareness of the limitations and fragmentation of archives needs to feature in both the metadata describing collections as well as in the narrative shaping the exhibition and display of archival treasures.

An exploration of the way in which the construction and location of archives are fundamentally entangled with issues of identity, community, and belonging in modern nation-states, Lustig's work would be of interest to Jewish and cultural studies researchers, historians, archivists, and library professionals. In exploring the history and postwar legacies of the Nazi's destruction of Jewish archives in Europe during World War II, Lustig's book would also be of interest to readers of Lisa Moses Leff's complex portrait of Jewish historian, Zosa Szajkowski in *The Archive Thief* (2015), as well as Rachel Blumenthal's *Right to Reparations: The Claims Conference and Holocaust Survivors, 1951–1964* (2021).

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