

IN THE BEGINNING . . .

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Co-Editor

With great pleasure and pride we present the inaugural issue of **Judaica Librarianship**. The field of Judaica Librarianship is certainly not a new one, but several converging factors have stimulated the publication of a new journal for those concerned with the organization and management of Judaica and Hebraica collections.

The first factor is the increasing **professionalization** of the field. Whereas in the past, Judaica librarians tended to be rabbis or scholars knowledgeable in the contents of Jewish sacred books and/or the history of Jewish printing, today, those entering the field are usually graduates of library schools or of informal courses in Judaica librarianship, with subject background in Judaica, knowledge of Jewish languages, or both. This is not to minimize the need for the types of knowledge which the "old-time" Judaica librarian possessed. In certain branches of the field (Rabbinics, rare books), this expertise is a **sine qua non**. But with the growth of Jewish publishing and of Jewish studies, many other specializations have emerged—by audience served (academics, children); by medium (serials, audiovisuals); and by area or coterritorial language group (Arabic, Slavic, or Romance languages).

It would be interesting to debate which type of knowledge is primary for the Judaica librarian—**professional**, i.e., the principles of library science; **subject**, i.e., knowledge of Jewish history and literature; or **linguistic**, i.e., familiarity with the languages of the Jews and of the countries in which they reside(d). What is clear is that some combination of the three is essential for effective service. Each Judaica librarian has different specialties and strengths, and we hope that you will share your expertise with us.

The second phenomenon which necessitated a professional journal for Judaica librarians is the increasing **complexity** of librarianship—new cataloging codes, revisions of classification schemes and bibliographic standards, but most important—automation. None of us can assimilate all of the general library literature being issued, nor is it the purpose of this journal to do so. Instead, where a new development in the general library world has an impact on Judaica librarianship, we plan to analyze it, react to it, or—when necessary—lobby for change.

Closely related to the complexity of librarianship is the increasing **interdependence** of libraries, as more and more of them join networks or engage in cooperative activities. In our forum, we plan to examine both the impact of large networks on the handling of Judaica and Hebraica as well as to cover cooperative projects within the Judaica library community. The recent formation of organizations of Judaica libraries in the U.S. and Europe is evidence for the interest in cooperation.

Finally, the **internationalization** of the field has led to the need for a medium that can inform Judaica librarians of developments in the U.S., Europe, Israel, and elsewhere regarding such topics as the publication of major Judaica reference works and the design of computer systems with Hebrew alphabet capability. By learning of each other's activities, we can avoid duplication of effort, maximize our resources, and enhance service to our user communities.

Librarians have always been concerned with redundancy in publication, and we would therefore like to clarify the relationship between our journal and other serials of interest to the Judaica librarian. Ours is neither a bibliographic journal, a book reviewing medium, a printing history serial, nor the newsletter of the Association of Jewish Libraries—although elements of all these categories will be found in the pages of **Judaica Librarianship**. Excellent publications already exist with the primary purpose of providing these types of information. While the focus of most of them is the **book**, we instead focus on the **institution**—the Judaica library of any size, in any setting, and with any subject, language, or media specialty. We would like **Judaica Librarianship** to be the journal of record for the field, thus eliminating the scatter of the literature which has existed to date—articles on Judaica acquisitions, cataloging, and reference sources published in a variety of general library science periodicals not seen by most Judaica librarians.

We have assembled a very distinguished board of contributing editors who can write with authority on many facets of the profession. They would all prefer, however, to receive **your** contributions, letters, suggestions, and questions. The editors also welcome feedback on the design, content, and policies of the journal.

This being a Jewish publication, it is appearing somewhat later than originally planned. The editorial board has put in countless hours to assure that every word in the journal is correct and that its format meets all bibliographic standards. As the Jewish proverb goes, "All beginnings are difficult," and now that we have passed that stage, we hope that future issues will appear as scheduled, and provide you with current, relevant information on the fascinating profession of Judaica librarianship.