

REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

Index of Articles on Jewish Studies and Index to Hebrew Periodicals: A Comparison

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Historical Notes

The *Index of Articles on Jewish Studies* (known to librarians and bibliographers by its Hebrew acronym RaMBI) grew out of various attempts by the editors of *Kiryat Sefer*, the National Library's bibliographic quarterly, to add a selection of periodical articles to its new book listings. In 1968, on the initiative of the late Yisakhar Yoel, *RaMBI* was begun as a separate bibliographic journal; the first year of coverage was 1966. At the Haifa University Library, Yosef Yerushalmi's pioneering efforts to make the contents of Hebrew periodicals accessible on cards to the library public led to a computer-based annual bibliography of Hebrew periodical articles, with 1977 as the first year of coverage. We shall henceforth call the Haifa index by the first word of its Hebrew title: *Mafteah*.

RaMBI

RaMBI is a classified bibliography of articles complemented by indexes of 1) authors, 2) selected subjects (personal names, geographic names, book titles), and 3) book reviews. It indexes periodicals and collections; "Jewish Studies" in its title also means the society, politics, etc., of the State of Israel. Unlike *Kiryat Sefer*, which attempts in its book listings to be complete for Israel and Judaica, *RaMBI* applies the principle of selectivity, with research interest the governing factor. Not only research but also informational material useful to research is included, as are popular summaries of use to students and teachers.

Frequency has been a problem; at the moment I would call *RaMBI* a somewhat irregular annual. Publication schedules are affected inter alia by budgetary restrictions. The latest issue is double no. 20/21, of some 600 pages, imprinted 1982

but actually distributed in 1983, with articles covered dating mainly from 1981, but including also much material (especially foreign-language, which takes longer to arrive) from 1980 and earlier. The articles indexed are in Hebrew, Yiddish, and most European languages. Collections with a primary relationship to Jewish scholarship are covered fully, and as for others, one is sometimes amazed at the ability of *RaMBI* (like its parent, *Kiryat Sefer*) to pick up Judaica in out-of-the-way places. Literary criticism is selectively included, but not creative writing (fiction, poetry, etc., appearing in journals), which is excluded altogether.

Mafteah

Haifa's *Mafteah* is a "Wilson Company" type index including authors and subjects in one alphabet, with each entry bibliographically complete. It covers Hebrew-language periodicals only, excluding dailies and weeklies. One-time collections are also excluded, but the definition of "periodicals" is generous enough to include irregular serials and semi-serials such as the quadrennial *Proceedings* of the World Congress of Jewish Studies. The automatic exclusion of weeklies, not to speak of dailies, undoubtedly leaves out useful items (one can think of the American Hebrew weekly *Hadoar*), but also serves to eliminate from consideration many articles which are entertaining rather than informational. A few journals are considered too technical for inclusion, and *Mafteah* also excludes some unsigned material such as organizational news and advertising. Otherwise, coverage is complete, with no attempt at selectivity. The rapidly growing thesaurus testifies to the large and varied number of subjects. The number of Hebrew journals in existence astonished the compilers; the tally for the latest issue (the 1981 annual) is 212, of which 36 did not publish in 1981 but are presumed still to exist. (As against this the latest *RaMBI* has 166 by my count, though this is Hebrew only, not counting the many journals and collections in Yiddish, English, etc., which *RaMBI* fully or partially indexes.)

The *Mafteah* is an annual, with coverage for the year indexed plus some items from the previous year received too late for inclusion. Like *RaMBI*, *Mafteah* is further behind in publication than it would like to be, usually nearly a year (the 1982 cumulation is expected late in 1983); therefore beginning in 1983 a microfiche supplement is being issued

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	Index of Articles on Jewish Studies <i>RaMBI</i>	Index to Hebrew Periodicals <i>Mafteah</i>
Coverage		
<i>Dates</i>	Since 1966.	Since 1977.
<i>Frequency</i>	Annual.	Annual. From 1983 three microfiche supplements per year.
<i>Currency</i>	Time lag in coverage. Irregular publication. Some double issues.	Relatively up-to-date. Online version available.
<i>Forms</i>	Periodicals, serials, collections and weekend editions of the daily press.	Periodicals and irregular serials. Excludes collections, weeklies, and dailies.
<i>Languages</i>	Hebrew, Yiddish, and most European languages.	Hebrew only.
<i>Subjects</i>	Jewish Studies and Israel. Some literary criticism. No creative writing.	General and Jewish. Includes creative writing.
<i>Comprehensiveness</i>	Selective. Research and informational material. Criteria not explicit.	Complete coverage within stated criteria. Excludes unsigned bulletin-type material and very technical journals.
Format		
<i>Entries</i>	Only one bibliographically complete entry under main subject. Brief entry under secondary subject(s).	Complete data under author as well as subject(s).
<i>Annotations</i>	Added where title is not content-indicative.	Insufficient.
<i>Classification / Indexing</i>	Classified arrangement. Subject index for "self-indexing" subjects only (proper names).	Dictionary arrangement of authors and specific subjects. Thesaurus available.
<i>Book Reviews</i>	Integrated into the classified sequence and also indexed separately.	With few exceptions, not integrated into subject index.

three times per year — but only for subjects — excluding the author entries of the annual cumulation. An up-to-date cumulated index from 1977 on is accessible to Haifa residents through the computer terminal at the University Library's reference desk. This online database permits a variety of approaches in searching. Book reviews are given in a special supplement arranged by author of book reviewed. Only in exceptional cases are they entered under reviewer and subject(s) in the main lists. (In this respect *RaMBI* is superior.) Incidentally, *Mafteah's* book review section is the only one with non-Hebrew materials, since books in a number of languages are reviewed in Hebrew periodicals.

Subject Access

In *Mafteah*, all subject headings are in Hebrew. A thesaurus was built from scratch on a hierarchical basis and is revised and updated by a "terminology committee" of librarians (with occasional

aid from experts). At the time a new subject is established, its "see" and "see also" references are also decided upon. These references appear in the annuals, although the numerous "see also" references appearing with many subjects may be more confusing than helpful for some users. Terminological change is another problem inherent in this type of subject indexing. *RaMBI* saves itself a lot of trouble by supplementing its classification with "self-indexing" subjects only, but at the cost of making the material less retrievable. We should add that there is generous cross-referencing in *RaMBI*, but usually (as in *Kiryat Sefer*) it is for items with more than one subject, which are entered in one class and "referenced" from another. The same item in *Mafteah* would be found with full bibliographic data under both subject headings. *RaMBI's* classification scheme, while detailed enough in places, makes it difficult to retrieve such subjects as Shabat, Tefilin, "Hasidut Ashkenaz," Conservative Judaism — one could add many more, and as the years go by and

more volumes are added the problem will become more severe.

RaMBI enjoys an advantage in the area of annotations, which are supplied for titles not self-explanatory. The policy of *Mafteah* is to add only the most necessary explanatory phrases, and no annotations as such. This produces cases where the reader is puzzled about the connection of the article to the subject under which it appears, if not about the nature of the article itself.

The main features of *RaMBI* and *Mafteah* are compared in the above table. In spite of a certain amount of overlap, they complement each other remarkably.

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