Romanized Hebrew Script in the Online Catalog at the Ohio State University Libraries

Amnon Zipin
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

Introduction

Until January 1984, the cataloging of works in Hebrew script at the Ohio State University Libraries (O.S.U.L.) followed the practice of the Library of Congress (LC). This practice resulted in bibliographic records that included both Roman and Hebrew scripts. Hebrew script was used for the body of the description, the series statement, and quoted notes. All access points, the collation, and a short title were in the Roman script. Following this practice allowed the library to maintain a union card catalog in which bibliographic records in all scripts were interfiled. Following the initiative of Dr. Charles Cutter, the first Jewish Studies Librarian at O.S.U.L., the library also maintained a separate Hebrew script title file. In that file, all bibliographic records for Hebrew and Yiddish works have title cards in the original script, arranged in Hebrew order.

During the nineteen seventies, the majority of O.S.U.L. cataloging records were produced through OCLC, except for some non-Roman scripts, which were handled manually. (In 1977, however, O.S.U.L. started cataloging Japanese and Cyrillic in Romanization through OCLC.) At the same time, the library was preparing to close its card catalog and replace it with an online catalog.

LCS, originally the Library Circulation System, has become the Library Control System, which includes an online catalog (Miller, 1979-1980). Starting in 1981, the library planned to add new catalog records only to LCS and to close its card catalog.

At that time, the East Asian Librarians, the Jewish Studies Librarian, and the Middle East Librarian insisted that the library continue to use original title page script in its bibliographic records.

The Case Against Romanized Records

The following arguments were brought forward by the Jewish Studies Librarian:

1. The Association of Jewish Libraries' (AJL) resolution of 1977 that called upon LC to continue vernacular cataloging in the original script, and LC's agreement to do so.

2. The expectation that OCLC would keep its promise and develop Hebrew script capability.

3. Faculty support for continuation of Hebrew script cataloging.

4. The hope that O.S.U.L. would develop its own Online Data Collection.

These arguments deserve further discussion.

During the 1977 annual meeting of the Association of Jewish Libraries and the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies (CARLJS), Dr. Bella Hass Weinberg led a discussion on the Romanization of Hebrew script in cataloging. The discussion ended with recommendations made by Dr. Weinberg that were adopted as resolutions by both AJL and CARLJS (Zipin, 1978).

The resolutions called upon LC and on bibliographic utilities, to preserve the script of the title page in bibliographic records. Until the technology for that process became available, the resolution called for the use of machine-reversible transliteration (letter-for-letter substitution) from the source script (e.g., Hebrew) into the target script (e.g., Roman).

The assumption was that while work proceeded on the development of Hebrew capability for online catalogs, one could catalog in reversible transliteration that would later be converted by machine to the original script, i.e., Hebrew.

LC and OCLC provided neither machine-readable cataloging in Hebrew nor reversible transliteration, employing instead a highly error-prone and ambiguous system of phonetic transcription for the Romanized elements of Hebrew bibliographic records. Strong lobbying efforts by Judaica librarians convinced the Library of Congress to continue its practice of cataloging Hebrew in the original script. Until 1983, the mixed-script records were the only product available from LC's Cataloging Distribution Service for monographs in Hebrew script. O.S.U.L. accepted the proposal that its cataloging operation continue to follow LC practice. Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Hebrew, and Yiddish bibliographic records continued to feature original script.

The second argument against fully Romanized records was the hope that OCLC would keep its promise to develop Hebrew capability. Even though we were already skeptical in 1981 about the strength of OCLC's commitment to its promise, we still believed that eventually the project would be completed. It is now a published decision of OCLC not to complete that development (Schieber, 1982). Even if OCLC had developed Hebrew alphabet capability, its usefulness for LCS would have been questionable. The bibliographic records that LCS accepts from OCLC have to be within the basic MARC character set, which does not include the Hebrew alphabet. We had planned to use the Romanized bibliographic records from OCLC for our online catalog (LCS), and the promised OCLC Hebrew alphabet capability to print one record for our vernacular title file.

The third argument was the clear preference of the faculty to continue the use of original alphabet data in bibliographic records. The O.S.U.L. administration is very responsive to the needs and wishes of its patrons. Their preference, added to the other arguments, led the library to its decision in 1981 not to fully Romanize its catalog.

The fourth argument against complete Romanization was unique to O.S.U.L.'s situation. We were hoping that development of Online Data Collection for LCS would allow us to add non-Roman records to the online catalog without having to fully Romanize them. LCS displays bibliographic information in one of two major forms: *Master Record Display* (Figure 1) and *Full Bibliographic Record* (Figure 2).

```
        PJ5042L431982       Leket   shirah 'Ivrit hadashah  /
        NOLC      3198024   1982        1   ADDED:   840317    NENG    FBR
        01        001       MAI
        PAGE 1 END
        dsl/2
```

Figure 1. Master Record Display in LCS.

```
PJ5042L431982
    Leket    shirah 'Ivrit hadashah  / liket    ve-'arakh Yisra'el   Manor.   Yerush-
alayim :   ha-Mahlakah    le-hinukh  ule-tarbut ba-golah shel ha-Histadrut ha-
Tsiyonit ha-'olamit,   742 (1982 or 1983)  53 p. ;   18 cm.
    (Gesher le-mishtalmim ; 2)Poems.  Vocalized.
SUB: 1. HEBREW POETRY, MODERN.
AE : 1. MANOR, YISRAEL.  2. SERIES.
LC CARD #: NONE  TITLE #:3198024   OCLC #:10620073      &3c840427
PAGE 1   END
fbl/2
```

Figure 2. Full Bibliographic Record (FBR) Display in LCS.

```
   01      1    1773241     Authors, Greek (Modern)--Turkey--Biography.
   02           1425996     Authors' Guild
   03            90197         SEARCH UNDER:  Authors' League of America.  Authors'
   04      0    1766193     AUTHORS, HEBRES--CORRESPONDENCE
  >05      1    1529939     Authors, Hebrew      *(SEE BELOW)
   06      3    1652813     Authors, Hebrew--Biography.
   07      1    1766876     Authors, Hebrew--Biography--Addresses, essays, lectures.
   08      1    1654378   * Authors, Hebrew--BIOGRAPHY--JUVENILE LITERATURE
   09      0    1529940     Authors, Hebrew--CANADA
   10      0    1766156     Authors, Hebrew--CORRESPONDENCE
ENTER TBL/line no. FOR TITLES.   *ENTER SAL/line no. FOR MORE INFORMATION.
ENTER PS- FOR PRECEDING PAGE; ENTER PS+ FOR NEXT PAGE.
sub/authors, hebrew

    Authors, Hebrew--Biography.                                        (3 TITLES)
01 Govrin, Nurith.           Me-ofek  el ofek  :  G. Shofman, haya  1982 FBR
02 Nash, Stanley.            In search of Hebraism :  Shai Hurwitz   1980 FBR
03 Gliksberg, Hayim, 1904-   Shemurim ba-lev./                        1975 FBR
PAGE 1 END   FOR AVAILABILITY ENTER DSL/ AND LINE NO.
```

Figure 3. Subject Access to Full Bibliographic Records.

The master, or short record, is added to LCS directly by Ohio State University. All books and serials in the library have a short record in LCS. The original master record file was created from the information in the Library's shelflist. Additional records have been added to the file on a weekly basis. The short bibliographic record includes call number, main entry, short title, LC card number, title number, publication date, language indication, and holdings information. In a way, the master record file constitutes a limited online catalog. One can access a short record through the call number, main entry, title, or a combined author-title search.

The shortcomings of the master file as an online catalog are:

1. The bibliographic description is very limited.

2. The lack of subject, series, and added entries access to the bibliographic records.

In order to have a true online catalog, one needs the full bibliographic record (FBR). The FBR includes all the information traditionally found on catalog cards, and allows access to the record through all access points that are available in a union card catalog. The

```
01      6    1746416   M   Sidrah be-'arikhat 'Amirah Hagani
02      4    1762836   M   Sidrah be-'arikhat 'Azri'el Ukhmani
03      0    1682382   M   SIDRAH BE-'ARIKHAT DAVID HANEGBI
04      0    1779002   M , SIDRAH BE-'ARIKHAT DAVID HANEGBI (SIFRIYAT PO'ALIM, TE*
>05     7    1770149   M   Sidrah be-'arikhat Natan Yonatan.
06      1    1792787   M   Sidrah la-no'ar 'a. sh. Kort'sak
07      1    1781171   3M*  ha-Sidrah lezekher Maks  Shlesinger. Mekorot  ;
08      1    1947143   M   Sidrat avivim
09      0    1778915   M   SIDRAT BIBLIYOGRAFYOT (MEKHON KATS LE-HEKER HA-SIFRUT *
10      1    1781210   M   Sidrat bikurim be-'arikhat 'Amirah Hagani
ENTER TBL/line no. FOR TITLES.   *ENTER SAL/line no. FOR MORE INFORMATION.
ENTER PS- FOR PRECEDING PAGE; ENTER PS+ FOR NEXT PAGE.
ser/sidrah be-arikhat natan yonatan


     Sidrah be-'arikhat Natan Yonatan.                              (7 TITLES)
01 Netser, Eli.              Mot ha-kanarit :  sipurim   1984        FBR
02 Buchan, Jacob.            Mi-yamim yamimah :  roman    1983        FBR
03 Lapio, Haim.              Reshimotav  ha-nistarot she 1983        FBR
04 Luz, Zvi, 1930-           Hitsetalvut  :  roman        1982        FBR
05 Dagan, Avigdor, 1912-     Letsane he-hatser /          1982        FBR
06 Semo, Arie.               Neshef masekhot :  roman     1982        FBR
07 Boshes, Hedda.            ha-Har ha-shelishi :  sipur 1981        FBR
PAGE 1  END   FOR AVAILABILITY ENTER DSL/ AND LINE NO.
```

Figure 4. Series Index to Full Bibliographic Records.

shortcoming of LCS in this regard is that all FBRs are added to the data base and to various indexes (subject, series, etc.) only through an interface with OCLC (Figures 3 and 4).

Thus, in order to have FBRs in LCS, the library has to catalog through OCLC. Once a week, all the records cataloged or changed by OSUL in OCLC are added to LCS and to its indexes. This mandatory interface means that in order to add an FBR for a book in Hebrew, one must catalog the book through OCLC. OCLC character set limitations mean that adding non-Roman alphabet records to LCS is possible only in Romanization. Making things even less attractive is OCLC's requirement that we use LC Romanization.

For many years, we hoped that a future development of LCS would allow us to add access points such as subject, added entries, and series without an OCLC interface. With an Online Data Collection capability in LCS, we would be able to add all the access points of non-Roman records to LCS indexes. The attraction of this scheme is clear. While preserving one record in the traditional form (a card with a mixture of Roman and non-Roman scripts), we would add all the Roman alphabet access points to LCS, and the library would have a true online catalog on the one hand and a vernacular title file to supplement it.

Card Catalogs for Non-Roman Scripts

The library administration accepted the above arguments, and when the union card catalog was closed, three new card catalogs were started: Arabic, Chinese, and Hebrew script. The decision to open new card catalogs, rather than continue to file non-Roman records in the old card catalog, stems from the adoption of AACR2.

The library adopted AACR2 in 1981 and closed its card catalog at the same time. The online catalog was to be all AACR2. The non-Roman cataloging records produced since January 1981 follow AACR2 and do not easily file in the AACR1 union card catalog.

The catalog of O.S.U.L., after 1981, consisted of the following:

1. A union card catalog that includes all bibliographic records produced by O.S.U.L. until the end of 1980.

2. An author and title online catalog that includes short bibliographic records for all O.S.U.L. holdings. This catalog also includes non-Roman bibliographic records in Romanization as illustrated in Figure 1.

3. An online catalog that includes FBRs for titles cataloged through OCLC since 1974. All new cataloging records are added only to this catalog since the closing of the card catalog.

4. Three new card catalogs for Arabic, Chinese and Hebrew scripts. These catalogs include full sets of cards for items cataloged since January 1981.

5. A Hebrew title card file that includes all Hebrew alphabet records in O.S.U.L. arranged according to the Hebrew alphabet.

The only change in the cataloging operation that the Judaica section experienced since the closing of the card catalog was that the full set of cards was no longer filed in the union card catalog. Instead, it was filed in a separate union card catalog for bibliographic records containing Hebrew script. We continued to add one card to our Hebrew title file as well as a short record to LCS.

Online Hebraica Cataloging

Things continued in this manner for three years (January 1981 - December 1983). During those years we kept evaluating the new situation. Even though the library continued to treat non-Roman scripts in the fashion we asked, we were not content. As a matter of fact, the measure of satisfaction with our solution kept decreasing as time progressed.

There were several reasons for our dissatisfaction. First, library patrons started using LCS with increasing frequency. Subject, series, and added entries access became a quick first step, and to many, a

last step, in gathering materials. This search strategy, which duplicates the one for the union card catalog, kept users ignorant of all books that did not have FBRs. Whereas in the card catalog they found both Hebrew and non-Hebrew books in a subject search, Hebrew books did not show on a subject search of the online catalog. We started to have the feeling that in the name of preserving the original script in the bibliographic record, we were really short-changing our patrons.

There were also some more prosaic reasons. Since most of the library departments had stopped using cards, central processing gave the operation a decreasing priority. At one time they even tried to move the responsibility for maintaining the card catalogs to the subject bibliographers. Limited personnel resources, and the possibility of additional demands by central processing (type your own added entries?) increased our uneasiness with the solution.

As long as we treated the solution as temporary, we could live with it. There were, however, a few developments during the 1981-1983 period that made us reevaluate our position:

1. The decision by OCLC to cease its efforts to develop Hebrew capability (1982).

2. The decision by the Library of Congress to start producing fully Romanized MARC Records in addition to cards (1983). We read this decision as an indication of a possible future change in LC's commitment to non-

Roman scripts. It was also much faster for us to use the new LC Romanized MARC records for Hebrew works that were available in OCLC than to continue copy cataloging with LC printed Hebrew cards.

3. The realization that LCS online data collection, that would have accommodated our needs, was not to be developed in the near future, but rather years away.

In light of the above, we decided to catalog Hebrew and Yiddish works through OCLC beginning in January 1984. This decision meant the following:

1. All Hebrew and Yiddish cataloging is done through OCLC in Romanization, following LC Romanization practices for Hebrew and Yiddish.

2. All records cataloged through OCLC have FBRs in LCS.

3. We continue to file one card in the Hebrew title file.

4. Necessary changes in workflow are made in response to the new situation.

The area where we encountered the greatest difficulty was in Romanizing our Hebrew and Yiddish records according to LC. LC has published its rules concerning Hebrew and Yiddish Romanization in three issues of its *Cataloging Service Bulletin* (nos. 118, 16, and 22). Those rules, when read together, are supposedly sufficient for Romanization of Hebrew and Yiddish; nothing could be further from reality. We discovered in the first six months of 1984, that LC either does not follow its own rules,

or has additional rules that have never been published. We approached LC with this question and received a detailed document, a pre-publication copy of additional rules concerning Hebrew and Yiddish Romanization which subsequently appeared in *Cataloging Service Bulletin*, no. 26 (Fall 1984).

Even with a complete set of rules, LC Romanization is highly complicated. Vocalization of Hebrew according to LC's system demands a highly sophisticated knowledge of grammar and modern Hebrew usage. Such knowledge, combined with the additional time needed in the cataloging process to do complete Romanization is making the cost of producing the online Romanized record much higher than that of producing the traditional card. (Reversible transliteration, which does not reconstruct missing Hebrew vowels, is much more cost-effective, and allows a future machine-conversion to original script display when the technology becomes available.) Only our dependency on LC cataloging and compliance with OCLC requirements convinced us to adhere to this system reluctantly.

While the Romanization slowed down the operation at the point of creating the bibliographic record, we saw benefits further along the line. There is no longer a need to produce a complete set of cards for each record, to type added entries, or to file those cards. The waiting time between the cataloging of a book and the appearance of the bibliographic record in the library catalog is shortened considerably. All new records have, in addition to the short record, an FBR in LCS containing all the information on a catalog card.

In order not to lose original script access, we continue to file one card in the Hebrew title file (Figure 5). This card is obtained from OCLC. When O.S.U.L.'s record is added to OCLC, one card is produced for the O.S.U.L. shelflist (which for some highly questionable reasons is still manual), and an additional card is produced for Hebrew or Yiddish records. This additional card is mailed to the Judaica section of the library, where the original title is typed on the card, which is then filed in the Hebrew title file.

The new operation required several changes in workflow. In the past, both original and copy cataloging of Hebrew were done in the Judaica section. This is an anomaly in a library that divides its cataloging primarily by type—original cataloging versus copy cataloging—rather than by language or subject. After a period of training in book formats and MARC tagging, we have moved most of our copy cataloging into the Library Copy
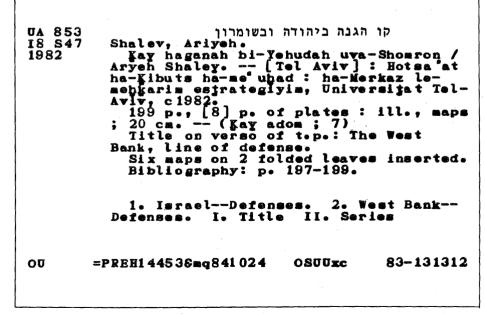

Figure 5. Hebrew Title Card

Cataloging Unit. The Jewish Studies librarian still revises all records before adding them to OCLC, but only for mistakes in Romanization and name authority work. We hope in the future to completely move our copy cataloging out of the Judaica section and into the Library Copy Cataloging Unit.

Conclusions

This description of the events at O.S.U.L. was written a year after we started cataloging Hebrew and Yiddish through OCLC. The decision to do so was the right one for O.S.U.L. at the time. It is not necessarily the right decision for other Judaica libraries. In O.S.U.L.'s case, we have a strong commitment to OCLC which will probably continue in spite of technological advantages of other bibliographic utilities. Many other Judaica libraries are not bound by such a commitment. Such libraries could investigate other possibilities, such as RLIN (the Research Libraries Information Network).

I would say further that the appeal of any system that requires, as part of treating Hebrew script in an online environment, the use of LC's Romanization for Hebrew, is questionable. The most persuasive incentive in O.S.U.L.'s case, was the existence of an online catalog in the library which we could not use for non-Roman bibliographic records unless we cataloged them through OCLC. The advantages of the online catalog were stronger than our desire to maintain original script in the body of the description of the bibliographic record.

References

Miller, Susan L., Yamauchi, Jean. "The Automating of a Large Research Library." In: *Proceedings of the 24th College and University Machine Records Conference.* (Indianapolis : CUMREC, 1979), paper no. 24, pp. 1-13.

Miller, Susan L. "The Evolution of an On-line Catalog." In: *New Horizons for Academic Libraries.* Ed. by Robert D. Stueart and Richard D. Johnson, (New York : K. G. Saur, 1979), pp. 193-204.

Miller, Susan L. "The Changing Role of a Circulation System: The OSU Experience," RQ, Vol. 20 (Fall 1980), pp. 47-52.

Schieber, Phil. "Non-Roman Alphabet Project Update," *Research Libraries in OCLC,* No. 6 (April 1982), pp. 2-3.

Zipin, Amnon, "Hebrew in Computerized Cataloging in the USA," (In Hebrew; English abstract) *Yad La-Kore,* Vol. 17, No. 4 (1978), pp. 194-199.

Amnon Zipin is the Jewish Studies Bibliographer at Ohio State University Libraries in Columbus, Ohio.