

# COMMENTARIES

To The Editors:

*Congratulations on a super first issue! The only criticism I have is that this is sure going to be a hard act to follow! I read every single informative and readable word.*

Goldie Sigal  
Judaica Bibliographer/  
Cataloguer  
McLennan Library  
McGill University  
Montreal, Canada

Dear Dr. Weinberg:

*. . . . Congratulations are due you on **Judaica Librarianship**. Rarely do I read a journal in which almost every item is of interest to me professionally. Kol Ha-Kavod!!*

Mira Levine  
Institute of Contemporary Jewry  
The Hebrew University of  
Jerusalem

## Approbations

Dear Dina Abramowicz:

*Your review of my bibliography was very fair and, in its very length and detail, flattering . . . . I shall certainly read and reread your review when I get back to revising the book.*

***Judaica Librarianship** looks like an impressive new journal and I'm pleased that your review of **Yiddish Literary and Linguistic Periodicals and Miscellanies** could appear there.*

Leonard Prager  
University of Haifa

## The Chosen Book

To: Profs. Meir & Edith Lubetski:

*We read your article dealing with the catalogs of book exporters from Israel, in the new English language librarian's journal. Before we say anything else, we would like to wish you good luck in your endeavors, and hope that you will be successful in introducing books from Israel to readers outside Israel.*

*We regret, however, that we weren't included in your list, particularly in light of the fact that an advertisement for the books we publish appeared one page before your article. The firm of Rubin Mass Ltd., Jerusalem, has been an exporter of books from Israel for over fifty years. Some say that we are one of the largest book exporters in Israel, and note our fast and efficient service for books as well as periodicals in all languages from every publisher in Israel.*

*We export to university libraries as well as to bookstores; religious and educational institutions; to private individuals, etc., in the United States, Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia, and we also serve national libraries in several countries. We issue monthly lists of original and new books published in Israel on various subjects, including text books; our 270th list has just been issued.*

*We would be grateful to you if you would inform your readers about us in your important journal.*

*Once again, good luck.*

*Thank you very much.*

Rubin Mass, Ltd.  
Publishers and Booksellers  
P.O. Box 990  
Jerusalem 91009

*[Translated from Hebrew by Sarabeth Kufeld, Stern College Library.]*

## Reply:

Many thanks for your note of congratulations on our new journal. We are delighted that you were interested enough to write to us concerning your services. Somehow, we thought of you more as a reputable publisher than a bookseller, and therefore did not include your catalog in our article.

Since you provided a general description of your services in your letter, let me just add a few additional notes about your catalog for our readers.

This list is arranged alphabetically by Hebrew title, with English transliteration; there are no subject divisions. Mainly Hebrew books are listed, with a small number of English titles. The selections are generally scholarly, but also include belles-lettres. In July 1984, Rubin Mass began publishing its first list of out-of-print books.

Profs. Meir & Edith Lubetski

## Deweineazar

To the Association of Jewish Libraries:

We are in the final stages of deciding whether or not to re-catalog our Alex F. Weisberg Library from Elazar to Library of Congress. The Library Committee has asked me to investigate one further question, and I hope that you can be of some help.

Are you aware of any "bridges" between the two systems that are available? For example, is there a catalog available for sale or use which provides both sets of numbers, much as LC provides both their own classification and Dewey?

I have read Weinberg's article entitled "Deweineazar" from the first issue of *Judaica Librarianship*, and it has been a valuable resource in this decision-making process. Unfortunately, our question does not seem to be addressed in any publication that I have located.

Your help in this matter will be appreciated.

Valerie Oleon Nelson  
Librarian  
Temple Emanu-El  
Dallas, Texas

## Reply:

Dear Ms. Nelson:

Your letter of Nov. 27, 1984 has been referred to me as it mentions my article in the journal. I am glad you found my article of value.

As I mentioned in the preface to the article, I don't actually have practical experience in synagogue libraries, and therefore do not have the contacts which would make it possible for me to answer your question with certainty. My impression, however, is that as Elazar is a relatively new system and since LC is perceived as a system suitable primarily for research libraries of Judaica, such a 'translation' scheme does not exist. Of course, for most works your library is likely to own, printed LC cards probably exist with complete class numbers, so author searches in the LC or *National Union Catalog* may obviate the need for such a table.

The question is an interesting one, however, and I would like to publish it in the journal, to invite responses from our readers.

Bella Hass Weinberg

Dear Ms. Weinberg:

Thank you so much for responding to my question about changing from Elazar to LC. I would be pleased to have you include the question in your upcoming issue.

For your information, we are proceeding with the transition between classification systems. To the extent that needed records are available on MARC tapes, we are utilizing the services of MARCIVE in San Antonio for printed card sets and labels. When that source is exhausted, we will turn to LC for author/title searches of our older titles.

Although many factors were involved, our decision to change to LC was based primarily upon user knowledge of the system, integration of the collection, and availability of the printed cards rather than original cataloging.

I look forward to receipt of the next issue of *Judaica Librarianship*. The first was most informative and well-done.

Thanks again for your help and attention.

Valerie Oleon Nelson

## Reference Department

### Index of Articles on Jewish Studies

(A response to A. Greenbaum's article in *Judaica Librarianship*, 1)

We wish to clarify a few points in order to present a more accurate picture of the extent and comprehensiveness of RAMBI'S contents.

The purpose of RAMBI is to publish a classified bibliography of articles on Jewish Studies, based mainly on scholarly research or containing important data for such research. The material is selected from *all sorts of publications* (periodicals, jubilee volumes, memorial volumes, conference proceedings, and general collections of articles), in Hebrew, Yiddish and European languages.

The staff surveys all of the periodicals which are received in the Jewish National and University Library Periodicals Department (some 15,000 now on the accessions list), which accounts for our "amazing ability . . . to pick up *Judaica* in out-of-the-way places". Thus, RAMBI is the most comprehensive listing of *Judaica* articles, with the most complete information on the state of research in Jewish Studies, in the world today.

Having said that, we feel that some points discussed in Greenbaum's article are placed in better focus — such as the fact that most of RAMBI'S contents are in the European languages (RAMBI No. 20/21

contains articles from about 1220 different journals and collections, whereas the focus of Greenbaum's article was on the 166 Hebrew journals alone).

We believe that our criteria for selection are quite explicit, as stated in the Foreword to our bibliography, and restated above in this letter — "articles . . . based mainly on scholarly research or containing important data for such research".

Regarding subjects not easily retrievable — of the four subjects mentioned in Greenbaum's article only one, tefillin, is difficult to retrieve. We expect that this problem will be resolved in the near future, when our Index will be computerized. The frequency of publication, too, will be brought up-to-date when the Index is computerized. At present, RAMBI No. 24 (1983) is in print, and No. 25 (1984) is projected for publication in Fall 1985.

Bitya Ben Shammai  
Susie Cohen  
Rambi Editorial Board

## Response

Dear Mr. Baker,

In connection with your article in *Judaica Librarianship*, v.1, no. 1, Fall 1983, concerning your work with family historians, you may be interested in the following:

The Reference Service at the Jewish National & University Library is, like YIVO, a popular address for people searching for their "roots". However, most of our queries arrive by mail, rather than in person, so that all of the searching must be done by our staff. It is, therefore, our policy to undertake extensive research only in cases where there is some possibility of success, as for an ancestor who authored books or who held an important position.

The form letter which is our standard reply to such queries, is enclosed. It represents an attempt by us to direct our correspondents to the kind of source material listed in *Toledot*.

If you have any suggestions, I will be pleased to hear from you.

Libby Kahane  
Reference Service  
The Jewish National &  
University Library  
Jerusalem, Israel

Dear Sir,

Your genealogical query was forwarded to the Reference Service for clarification and reply.

We wish to inform you that the archives of the Jewish National and University Library do not include birth, marriage or death

registers.

The library has books and periodicals which deal with the history of Jewish communities, families and family names. However, a lack of sufficient personnel precludes conducting genealogical searches in them.

For information about sources of genealogical research we recommend the following magazine:

*Toledot*; a journal of Jewish genealogy.

It is published at

155 East 93 Street, New York, N.Y. 10028

Libby Kahane  
Reference Service

## Reply:

Dear Mrs. Kahane:

I appreciated your comments in your letter of December 3rd. *Judaica* libraries are not alone (far from it) in their plight, as far as genealogical reference is concerned. It is a general trend in North America, and I recall having seen citations for works on how to handle the flow of genealogical visitors and correspondence. In a lighter vein, *American Libraries* recently featured a letter-to-the-editor from a reader suggesting a fee structure for various types of reference service. As I recall it, the proposal was put forth that the first five minutes of a genealogical consultation ought to cost the client \$5, the next five minutes, \$50, and the next five minutes, \$500!

Under such conditions, it is no wonder that libraries are no longer able to provide personalized service, especially for requests sent by mail. In your form letter I note that reference is made to *Toledot*, to which I was a contributing editor. Though the address you give is still valid (it is the home address of the editor-in-chief), the journal is virtually defunct. However, the void is being filled by numerous active local groups, such as the Jewish Genealogical Societies of New York, Washington, Chicago, and Los Angeles (among others), all of which publish newsletters. For the last four years these organizations have held joint conventions, each year in a different city, and attendance has risen steadily. In a future version of your form letter it might be a good idea to refer your clients to one or another of these societies. (I have the address of the Jewish Genealogical Society of Illinois at hand: P.O. Box 481022, Niles, Illinois 60648 — and they might be able to supply you with a list of all known genealogical societies in the U.S. and Canada.)

Zachary M. Baker  
Jewish Public Library  
Montreal, Canada