

# COMMENTARIES

Dear Dr. Weinberg and Dr. Posner:

Just a word of sincere and enthusiastic congratulations on the appearance of the second issue of *Judaica Librarianship*.

Yours is a most impressive and valuable publication, which is an added sign of the maturity of the Jewish library profession. We indeed have come a long way. Many thanks for all your efforts, and best wishes for the further success and growth of this great contribution to the field.

Menahem Schmelzer, Librarian  
Jewish Theological Seminary of America  
New York, NY

## Catalog Department

[Paragraphs have been numbered in the following letter to facilitate response to specific points.—Eds.]

Dear Mrs. Weinberg:

- [1] I am commenting on your article in the vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring 1984) issue of *Judaica Librarianship* [on liturgy].
- [2] Your comments are interesting and for the most part valid. But I have some different points of view regarding some of the subject headings that LC assigns.
- [3] The Hebrew Union College Library uses LC liturgy main and added entry headings and it even assigns liturgy headings a la LC mode. But the only part which HUC regards in filing them is the part which gives access to the type of liturgy. Thus, in filing: "Siddur. Sabbath (Reform, Plaut). Hebrew & English. Selections." HUC disregards "(Reform, Plaut). Hebrew & English. Selections." We do not disregard "Sabbath" because that is a qualifier for the type of prayer. The next element in our filing a liturgy heading is the date.
- [4] Although we are capable of deriving a working knowledge of a filing hierarchy by using the NUC catalogs, we decided that we were inviting filing problems by using hierarchies. Moreover, as you state in your article, "it certainly complicates the life of the cataloger by demanding highly specialized knowledge, while it is doubtful that the user would approach the catalog with such a complex structure in mind."
- [5] Furthermore, we are not inclined to depend on the accuracy of our headings when they are on in-process temporary cards. One is not expected to be as analytical in providing temporary headings as one is expected to be when cataloging for permanence.
- [6] For the HUC Library, therefore, LC rite subject structure is ideal for gathering the rites together.
- [7] Even if we included rites in our filing arrangements I am not so sure that our readers would especially like to be sent to several different places to search for specific headings. If I myself were a non-library user, I would like to find all works of a rite in one place. I know that all Mahzorim of a particular rite will follow all Haggadahs of that rite and all Siddurim will follow the Mahzorim. Furthermore, I might want to assign rite subject headings to liturgical works that do not have uniform title headings. What good is an omnibus cross reference then?
- [8] Now I do have my range of concerns as a liturgy cataloger: the subject headings are not uniformly formulated, e.g. Judaism—Poland vs. Judaism—Sephardic rite vs. Reform Judaism. How does anyone know what form is used for what? The solution is naturally to provide cross references, e.g. "Polish rite liturgy, search under: Judaism—Poland—Liturgy" / "Reform Jewish Liturgy, search under: Reform Judaism (—Place)—Liturgy", etc.
- [9] I also agree that Judaism—Liturgy—Texts is a wasted subject. But I would not discard it altogether. There are works which do not lend themselves to descriptive cataloging data which reveals them to be liturgical in nature. A subject heading would help the reader find those liturgical works, e.g. Synagogue anniversary services and other non-standard liturgical works.
- [10] I would like the Library of Congress to bring out through the cataloging all the works **specified by the title pages** as Ashkenazic liturgy. They should not be lumped together with the unspecified rites, in my opinion. And if it is an Ashkenazic liturgy specially prayed by the Jews of Mantua then the heading should read (Ashkenazic, Mantua, Italy)—like (Sephardic, Italy) which LC already has established. If LC chooses not to do so then maybe we should make local subject headings to bring it out.
- [11] I have additional concerns. Many types of prayerbooks have not yet been cataloged by LC and therefore there are no patterns to follow, like **Hamesh Ta'aniyot or Arba' Taaniyot**. Basically they are selihot, but special selihot. At first I thought of using a uniform heading like Arba' Taaniyot or Hamesh Ta'aniyot. But now I have thought of using Selihot. Fast days or Selihot. Taaniyot and maybe to even differentiate the Taaniyot by no., e.g. Selihot. Fast days (4 or 5) with cross references from other possibilities.
- [12] I just discovered a new subject heading: "Yozerot." How will this heading be correlated with "Mahzor. Yotsrot." or "Siddur. Sabbath. Yotsrot."? Will "Yozerot" be used to describe a genre of piyutim while the other headings will be used as headings under which to enter specific Yotsrot?
- [13] Other concerns: What is the difference between "Tehinot" and "Judaism—Prayer-books and devotions"? If the title did not have the word "Tehinah" or "Tehinot" could one recognize a Tehinah when one sees it? Can "Jewish devotional literature" exist side-by-side with "Judaism—Prayer-books and devotions"?
- [14] As you stated, with some local changes, crossouts and cross references, I think that we can live with the LC system. But I do not think that you speak for **all** Judaica catalogers with reference to Rite subject headings, even allowing for the fact that HUC Library may take the oddball approach to filing liturgy headings.
- [15] I am sending a copy of this letter to Rabbi Wiener at LC so that he will be aware that there are other viewpoints on Rite subject headings, besides the ones expressed in your article. Those who desire to have issues in cataloging brought up and discussed are to be commended.

Bernard H. Rabenstein, Judaica Librarian  
Hebrew Union College Library  
Cincinnati, OH

## Reply:

Dear Mr. Rabenstein:

Thank you for your letter and for the careful reading you gave my paper on the cataloging of Jewish liturgy. The following are my responses to several of the points you made.

In paragraph 3, you write about subarrangement of liturgy headings. I find it somewhat surprising that Hebrew Union College ignores the qualifier "Reform" in subarranging liturgical works, because in that institution, one would expect users to seek out denominational variants of liturgical texts. In theory, it sounds simple to arrange Siddurim by date, but in my experience, this data element is often lacking in liturgical works. (Pearl Berger, one of our Associate Editors, notes in addition the problem of date of reissue vs. copyright date, which separates identical Siddurim.) In line with Ranganathan's "canon of ascertainability," at the YIVO Library, we subarrange Siddurim by place of publication—which is almost always given on the title page. While the actual text may be a reprint (from another city), or the title page may give a false place of publication, it is a concrete data element for cataloging and filing purposes—unlike edition, rite or supposed date. The term you use in paragraph 4, "filing hierarchy" is new to me, but I believe that a sharp distinction between cataloging and filing is not being maintained here. If you are ignoring the rite and language indicators in filing, they should be omitted from the heading; otherwise the basis of arrangement will be unclear to both filers and users. I should also like to point out that if you do not tag rite in the descriptive headings, then LC's rite subject headings are not redundant.

In paragraph 7, you state that you "might want to assign rite subject headings to liturgical works that do not have uniform title headings." I assume that you mean uniform title *main entries*. If, for example, the commentator received main entry, the uniform title would receive added entry, and the omnibus cross reference would indeed lead to it. In contrast, the subarrangement by main entry under the rite subject heading would *not* serve to bring all editions of a single liturgical work together in such cases.

In paragraph 9, you argue that JUDAISM—LITURGY—TEXTS is a useful subject heading for non-standard liturgical works. I assume you are referring to those for which uniform titles are unavailable and thus get title proper as main entry according to AACR2. The "catchall" subject heading would not serve, however, to bring those works together in a useful order. More specific subject headings, such as SYNA-

GOGUE ANNIVERSARY VOLUMES, on the model of SYNAGOGUE DEDICATION SERVICES, which LC has already established, (with a *see* or *see also* reference from JUDAISM—LITURGY—TEXTS) would serve this purpose effectively.

I think your suggestion that Ashkenazic liturgy be tagged is an excellent one, and I hope the Library of Congress will take note. This would prevent the charge of "Ashkenazic bias" in LC's liturgical cataloging.

In paragraph 11, you express the concern, which many Judaica librarians share, as to how to catalog liturgical works for which a pattern has not yet been set by LC. First of all, I hope that you will find useful information and guidance in our column CATALOG DEPARTMENT. Secondly, I urge you to be more confident, given your specialized knowledge of Jewish liturgy and familiarity with the needs of your library's users. As long as you grasp the essential principles of liturgical cataloging and provide multiple access points, I am sure that your original cataloging for problematic liturgical works will be more than adequate.

In the next two paragraphs of your letter, you point to the lack of clarity of the scope of certain liturgical headings established by LC. This is one of the problem areas mentioned in my article in this issue on LC Subject Headings. I trust your questions were rhetorical and that you do not expect me to answer for LC. I do encourage you to write to LC, however, for clarification.

Finally, in response to a comment in your next-to-last paragraph, I would like to make it clear that I do not presume to "speak for all Judaica catalogers with reference to rite subject headings." In the article, as in everything I write for *Judaica Librarianship*, I was expressing my opinions alone. I am grateful, however, that these have initiated a debate, and I thank you for participating in it.

Bella Hass Weinberg  
Co-Editor

## Media Judaica

Dear Mrs. Weinberg:

*The Jewish Archives Committee of the Washington State Jewish Historical Society would like to index its photograph collection and is seeking information on past experiences with a computerized index of photographs. If you have indexed your photo collection, or know of any Jewish archival group which has, we would like to hear about software used, inclusion of subject terms, successes, failures, etc. This project may be assumed by volunteers so an easy to maintain database would be desirable.*

Please send any reply to:

Isabel Stusser, Manuscripts  
Suzzallo Library, FM-25  
University of Washington Libraries  
Seattle, WA 98195

Thank you for any help you can give us on this.

Isabel Stusser  
Coordinator,  
Jewish Archives Project

## Reply:

Dear Ms. Stusser:

At YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, I have consulted on the organization of the slide bank and its catalog. The slide collection is based on YIVO's extensive photographic holdings. The original collection of photographs is housed in the YIVO Archives in folders arranged primarily geographically, as East European local Jewish history is the emphasis of the collection.

The slide collection is professionally cataloged, with a full description of each item and multiple access points, including subject, photographer, and geographic name. An authority file of names is maintained. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* was used as the source for many of the terms, with the *Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer* serving as the authority for geographic names. A flyer featuring some of the subject terms is enclosed. The full authority file and the complete catalog are maintained on cards.

Although there are certain clerical components of photograph indexing which can be delegated to volunteers, minimally the development of the subject heading list and the revision of the cataloging/indexing must be handled by a professional. Otherwise, the results can be disastrous, as I can personally attest.

A computerized project at YIVO which should be of interest to you is the videodisc project, in which photographs are preserved on that medium and indexed using D-Base II software. I am giving a copy of your letter to the project director, Josh Waletzky, who will write you separately.

I am assuming you got my name and address from the journal *Judaica Librarianship*, to which I believe your library subscribes. If you like, I can publish your letter in the next issue. You may then get responses from other readers who have indexed photographic collections.

Bella H. Weinberg  
Consulting Librarian  
YIVO  
New York, NY

Dear Dr. Posner:

I read your editorial comments at the beginning of the last issue of *Judaica Librarianship*, and was struck by one remark in particular. That was concerning the scarcity of spoken word material in Yiddish, for elderly people who are no longer able to read the language—"talking books," in short. It may interest you to learn that the Jewish Public Library has embarked on precisely such a program, as you can see by the enclosed press release.

The Yiddish Talking Books program has been an unqualified success, in my view. They have been circulating regularly, and many of them are in high and constant demand. The quality of readers is quite high, and in a few cases some genuinely memorable tapes have been produced. My own personal favorite is a recording of stories from Isaac Bashevis Singer's book *Mayses fun hintern oyvyn*, read in a *zaftik* Polish Yiddish by a local resident named Aaron Irlight, a native of Warsaw. (No attempt has been made to get readers to standardize or "synchronize" accents, but the result is intelligible to all who understand Yiddish.)

The press release was aimed at a Montreal audience, and so might not be germane in its entirety for publication in either *Judaica Librarianship* or the *AJL* newsletter. Still, I

think that a wider awareness of its existence and purpose is important, given the fact that the program fills an obvious lacuna. I might add that we are prepared to produce a precise list of our Yiddish Talking Books upon request (a formal catalogue may also be in the works), and that those who wish to order cassettes may acquire them at a price of \$7.50 per cassette.

Zachary M. Baker  
Librarian, Yiddish Department  
Jewish Public Library  
Montreal, Canada

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a ... list of our Yiddish Talking  
Books upon request. . . .

#### Yiddish Talking Books

#### PRESS RELEASE

The Yiddish Talking Books program at the Jewish Public Library has made great strides during its first six months. Over 30 titles (on 60 separate tape cassettes) have been recorded thus far, and these are now available to the general public.

The Yiddish Talking Books are intended to help the visually and physically han-

dicapped enjoy the books that they are no longer capable of reading. In addition, Yiddish lovers everywhere—including those who are able to understand but who cannot speak or read the language—will also derive pleasure from these taped novels, short stories, poems, humoresques and plays written by the finest Yiddish writers and read by devoted volunteers, among them some prominent Montreal Yiddish authors.

The Yiddish Talking Books collection includes selections by the following authors: Sholem Aleichem, I. L. Peretz, Sholem Asch, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Israel Joshua Singer, Joseph Opatoshu, Mani Leib, Moyshe Kulbak, Yehuda Elberg, Mordecai Husid, Chava Rosenfarb, and Rachel Korn.

Cassettes may be borrowed free of charge by Jewish Public Library members, and can be obtained at the library's circulation desk (5151 Côte Ste. Catherine Road).

While the Yiddish Talking Books collection continues to grow, volunteer readers are still needed in order for the program to make further progress. If you are interested in information about those talking books that are now available at the Jewish Public Library, or if you wish to lend a helping hand to this worthy project by serving as a volunteer reader, please call: [514] 735-6535 or 747-7617.

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