The Jewish Book Council Library Citation: History and Report of a Follow-up Study

Marcia W. Posner
JWB Jewish Book Council
New York, NY

Introduction
The Jewish Book Council and the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) have for many years cooperated in projects which help to establish, guide, and upgrade Judaica libraries in schools, synagogues, and Jewish community centers. In 1962, the Council published A Manual for Jewish Community Center, School and Congregation Libraries, by Sophia N. Cedarbaum, a child's librarian and author of many children's books. She was assisted by several members of AJL, including Mae Weine, then librarian of Congregation Beth Israel in Camden, New Jersey. The Cedarbaum Manual was supplanted by How To Organize a Jewish Library: A Source Book and Guide for Synagogue, School, and Center Libraries by Margot S. Berman—past-president of AJL's Synagogue, School, and Center Division (SSC)—(JWB Jewish Book Council, 1982). This pamphlet appears both on the Jewish Book Council's publication list and on AJL's list, as part of its "Beginner's Kit."


One area in which the Council and AJL have not yet cooperated is in the granting of citations of merit to Jewish Community Centers, Synagogues, Jewish Schools, and similar groups which have libraries that meet the minimum standards set down by The Council more than 36 years ago. The criteria were formulated by the Council in 1948 on the basis of a survey it had made of libraries of centers, synagogues, and schools. Criteria and minimum requirements as set forth in the application are: "the library must be organized for at least one year; at least one room must be set aside for its exclusive use; there must be a librarian either full or part time; a fixed annual budget; a minimum of 1000 books of Jewish interest regardless of language, an accession of a minimum of 100 books of Jewish interest during the previous year; a catalogue accessible to all readers; the library must be open at least ten hours a week; the library must have a shelf of Jewish and general reference works. In addition to the above requirements, the library must participate actively in Jewish Book Month activities and render various services for the enrichment of Jewish culture." The application form for the library citation is reproduced in Appendix A.

By 1984, the number of libraries that had received citations had reached 243. Much happens over a period of 36 years. Congregations and neighborhoods change. Judaica librarianship has changed. We wondered what had happened to those libraries. Were they still in existence? Had they progressed, remained the same, or had they, perhaps, deteriorated? The Council wished to know their current status not only to correct its mailing list, but also for the purpose of working with the Association of Jewish Libraries to establish new levels of library citations, and to revise and update the Council's publication, Standards for Jewish Libraries in Synagogues, Schools, and Centers, last revised in 1970.

The Follow-up Study
In the initial stages of the review process, a questionnaire was constructed (Appendix B) which expanded upon the minimum requirements needed for a library to receive a citation. A methodology for recording raw data was agreed upon, and a partial report of the results was made in March 1984. A follow-up query was mailed to non-responding libraries in June 1984. Those indicating that they had never received the questionnaire were sent duplicates. Sixteen more responses were thus acquired, and the additional data tabulated. Ten questionnaires were returned blank with notes saying that there was no longer a library staff to reply, nor was there a working library. Those libraries, and libraries returning questionnaires with insufficient data were subtracted from the number of libraries considered to have fully responded. The total number of libraries tabulated was 134, or 56% of the original mailing list of libraries that had received citations.

This does not necessarily mean that the respondents are the only viable libraries. A third query which did not include the long questionnaire, but which merely asked librarians to indicate whether or not they wished to remain on the mailing list and to make any necessary corrections in their address yielded additional libraries of uncertain status. Furthermore, some libraries, known to be established, answered neither questionnaire, follow-up, nor query. A final caution in evaluating the data—not every responding library answered every question.

The summary of the survey's findings, as it was submitted to the Jewish Book Council, follows. A copy of the full report is available from the author.

Major Findings and Interpretations

Collection Development
1. The rate at which books are acquired is an important indicator of a library's worth. A library which has been in existence for seven years and has a collection of 7,000 books is more vital than a 42-year-old library with 10,000 books.

2. The composition of a library's collection—i.e., the proportion of fiction, non-fiction, and reference material—is indicative of its ability to serve. The more effective the library, the smaller its fiction collection. The usual distribution was 25% fiction, 65% non-fiction, and 10% reference. Libraries whose fiction collection exceeded one-quarter of the total made a poor showing on provision of reference service, number of hours staffed, and people served.

3. Children's collections could be categorized on the average as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Material</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiction and picture books (incl. folktales)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible &amp; Bible tales</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion, ethics, prayer folklore and legend anthologies</td>
<td>05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday non-fiction &amp; stories</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social issues, life-cycle</td>
<td>05%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPLICATION FOR LIBRARY CITATION

to

JWB JEWISH BOOK COUNCIL

15 East 26th Street
New York, New York 10010

The undersigned herewith submit that it meets the minimum requirement of a Judaica library as set forth by the JWB Jewish Book Council.

Name of Library ________________________________

Name of Librarian ____________________________________________

Name of Institution ___________________________________________ 

Address ______________________________________________________

City __________________ State ____________ Zip Code _____________

1. The library was organized __________________________________________ (Library must be organized at least 1 year)

2. __________________________ rooms are set aside for the Library. (There must be at least 1 room set aside for the Library)

3. The librarian is full-time ___________ part-time ___________ Specify number of hours __________________________ (The library must have a librarian either full-time or part-time for a minimum of ten hours a week)

4. The income of the Library is ____________________________ The expenditures are ____________________________ (The Library must have a fixed budget)

5. The Library has ___________________________ books of Jewish interest. (The Library must have a minimum of 1,000 books of Jewish interest)

6. During the last year, ________ books of Jewish interest were accessed. Of these ________ books were acquired by purchase and ________ books were acquired by gift. (The Library must have an accession of a minimum of 100 books of Jewish interest during the previous year)

7. A catalog is ___________________________ accessible to readers. (The Library must maintain an accessible catalog)

8. The Library is open ____________________________ (The Library must be open ten hours a week on set days and hours)

9. The Library does/do not have _______________ a Jewish and general reference section.

10. The Library participates actively in Jewish Book Month activities and renders various services for the enrichment of Jewish groups as

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

(Continued on other side)
Figure 1 (continued)

11. The Library has created a Jewish atmosphere through the use of (art, exhibits, holiday displays, children’s arts and crafts, etc.)

It is understood that the above application is subject to review by the Library Committee of the JWB Jewish Book Council which will decide whether or not the Library meets all of the requirements. The Committee, in its discretion, may request the fulfillment of other criteria before granting the certificate.

(President of institution) ________________________________________________  
(signed)

(Rabbi or Executive) ____________________________________________________  
(signed)

(Librarian) ____________________________________________________________  
(signed)

(Date)_____________      

Attach printed material issued by the Library including library rules, publicity, booklists, library forms, bookplates and related items and if possible, a photograph of the library.

language — 02% 
flora, fauna — 02% 
cooking, health, medicine — 03% 
songs, music, dance, art, crafts — 03% 
literature/anthologies, poetry, plays — 05% 
biology — 05% 
reference — 10% 
biography — 05% 

100% 

4. Adult collections could be categorized on the average as follows:

fiction — 25% 
Bible and Talmud, rabbinic writings — 10% 
Jewish ethics, ritual practice, teachings, thought, prayer — 10% 
Jewish lifestyle, social & medical issues — 10% 
the arts — 05% 
immigration, geography, history, Holocaust and Israel — 25%

Library Staff and Hours

1. There is a direct correlation between the number of staff hours and the quality of a library. The more hours the librarian works, the better a library.

2. More people use a library when it has fixed hours of opening and there is a librarian in attendance. Libraries that are open "by appointment" or open all day on the honor system are seldom used.

3. The more hours a library is open, the more people use it. Although this seems self-evident, some respondents who staff a library fewer than ten hours weekly seemed puzzled as to why so few people use the library.

4. Children are the heaviest users of synagogue libraries on weekdays. Adults use the library more frequently on Sunday mornings, and evenings after business hours.

Library Staff

1. The number of hours the library is supervised by a librarian is more important than the librarian's credentials. In other words, if a library on a limited budget can afford to hire a professional librarian for only a few hours, or a para-professional for many more hours, they should opt in favor of more hours of library coverage.

2. Forty-nine libraries reported having professional librarians, five of whom were volunteers. When the librarian comes in for two–four hours a week solely for organizing the library (classifying, cataloging, etc.) and not also for administering the library (training volunteers, planning programs and
services), little benefit is reflected in library service or use of the library.

3. Where a library employs clerical help in addition to the librarian, the questionnaire responses reflected a more positive attitude and reported reference and other readers' services, displays, programs, and library lessons.

4. Depending solely on volunteer staff leads to a decline in library service. Even when the volunteers are dedicated and hard-working, they usually do not participate in professional associations and conferences, or otherwise keep abreast of professional library developments.

5. Volunteers are used most effectively when they are coordinated and supervised by a salaried librarian.

6. The best libraries employ professional librarians for more than twenty hours per week plus clerical help.

**Funding**

1. The pattern of budget categories is irregular. Some budgets provide for salaries and supplies; others include collection materials and salaries, while the supplies are funded in the institution's budget. Sometimes the school budget shares the librarian's salary, since the librarian works closely with the school.

2. Libraries which have their own budget are more active in providing service than those that do not. This is not a hard and fast rule, however.

3. Some libraries which are budgeted for salary and supplies, but that must depend on donations for acquisitions do very well—as long as the library is open and supervised an adequate number of hours and maintains good reader services, programs, and public relations.

**Programs and Services**

1. The more lectures, story-telling hours, and other programs and services a library offers, the more it is used.

2. Libraries that work to make themselves visible through the use of articles in bulletins, publishing bibliographies, and other means serve more people than those that do not.

3. The more positive the librarian's attitude (as interpreted from the narrative), the more programs reported.

4. Funding for the library increases in direct proportion to the library's services and programs.

---

**Figure 2**

Library Accreditation Review Questionnaire
JWB Jewish Book Council
15 East 26th St. New York, N.Y. 10010

Name of Library ________________________________________________________
Name of Institution ____________________________
Address __________________________________________ State ____________ Zip ______
(Kindly indicate your answers by checking the appropriate space or by filling in the space when necessary. Thank you.)

**General:**

1. How many years has the library been in existence?__________
   Has service ever been interrupted? Yes ________ No _________ If, "Yes," would you care
to explain the circumstances?__________________________________________________

2. How many room(s) does the library occupy?__________ Please give approximate
   measurement(s) in square feet.

3. Is the library's catalog housed in a standard library card catalog? Yes____
   No________

4. How many drawers in the card catalog does the library's collection occupy?__________
   Is the card catalog divided by author, title, subject, shelflist? Yes__________ No____
   If, "No," please describe its organization________________________________________

5. Do you have a library budget? Yes ________ No _________ If, "Yes," which range most
closely resembles your budget: $200-$500 ________, $500-$1000 ________, $1000-$2000 ________,
   $2000-$5000 ________, $5000-$10,000 ________, Other$__________
   Is this year's library budget larger than last year's? Yes ________ No _________

6. Please check those items included in your budget.
   New Books ________ Periodicals ________ Audio-Visual Materials ________ Programs____
   Publicity ________ Supplies ________ Salaries ________ Other ________

7. Does your library receive funds from sources other than its annual budget?
   Yes__________ No _________
   If, "Yes," please describe_____________________________________________________

   What % of your annual acquisitions are from gifts or donations? %

8. Is the library a member of a Jewish Library Association? If, "Yes," please name which one(s)?

**Staff:**

9. How many hours a week does the librarian(s) work?__________
   When is the library open? Please fill in the chart below with the actual open hours each day
   (see example.)

<p>| | | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.M.</td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.M.</td>
<td>4-6, 8-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Is the librarian(s) paid ________, unpaid ________; professional librarian ________;
    paraprofessional ________; holder of a Master's Degree in Librarianship ________;
    Bachelor's Degree in Librarianship ________; Certificate of Librarianship ________?
    If holder of a Certificate of Librarianship, is it Judaica Librarianship ________?
    Which institution granted the Certificate?________________________________________

(Continued on next page)
**Figure 2 (Continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>11.</th>
<th>Describe the librarian's Judaica training, knowledge or experience.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>In addition to the librarian the staff includes people in the following positions:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Collection:**

| 13. | What is the library's total number of books? ______ of audio-visual materials? ______ of periodical titles? ______ |
| 14. | How many of the above were acquired last year? books ______ AV ______ periodical titles ______ other ______ |
| 15. | Give the approximate % of the following to your total collection, if they are represented in your library: adult fiction ______, non-fiction ______, adult reference ______, juvenile fiction ______, non-fiction ______, juvenile reference ______, audio-visual materials ______, periodicals ______ |
| 16. | The library has a subject emphasis. Yes ______ No ______ If, "Yes," the subject is: ______ |
| 17. | Selection of library materials is made by the following: librarian ______, Library Board ______, others ______ |
| 18. | Does the library have a written "Book Selection Policy?" Yes ______ No ______ |
| 19. | Does the library receive the Jewish Book World on a regular basis? Yes ______ No ______ |
| 20. | Are reference services requested from the librarian? Yes ______ No ______ If, "Yes," are they readily available? Yes ______ No ______ Comments, if desired: ______ |
| 21. | Those requesting reference help are: adults in independent study ______, in adult-education classes ______, children ______ (other than students), students ______, staff who work in the institution where the library is housed ______, people in the community ______. Frequently asked reference questions are: ______ |
| 22. | Does the library service foreign-speaking patrons by including books written in their native language in the library collection? Yes ______ No ______ If, "Yes," which languages are represented? Yiddish ______ Hebrew ______ Russian ______ Farsi ______ Spanish ______ French ______ German ______ Other ______ |
| 23. | Does the library make use of automation (e.g. micro-computer)? Yes ______ No ______ If, "Yes," please describe the phase of library activity in which it is used (e.g. acquisitions, circulation . . .)? ______ |
| 24. | Does the library participate in Jewish Book Month? Yes ______ No ______ If, "Yes," please describe the activities, exhibits, or any other marking of the occasion: ______ Does the library usually hold a bookfair at this time? Yes ______ No ______ Additional comments: ______ |
| 25. | Who is allowed to use the services of the library? members only ______ the community ______, other than members, but by special permission ______ |
| 26. | How many people does the library serve each month? ______ |

**Programs and Services:**

| 27. | Describe the librarian's Judaica training, knowledge or experience. |

**Recommendations**

1. Libraries should increase their hours to accommodate the needs of adult users who are busy during working hours.

2. Depending on the rabbi or a member of the institution's staff to unlock the library door and circulate books solely on request should be discouraged.

3. When an institution's budget provides only minimal funds for the library, it is better for the larger part of the funds to be spent for a librarian's salary than for books.

4. If it is necessary to choose between a professional (MLS) librarian who is hired for a few hours a week and a para-professional who can be hired for more hours (on a lower pay scale), it is better to go for the longer hours with the para-professional.

5. There is confusion as to what constitutes a professional librarian, a para-professional, a technician, etc. Establishing standards and job descriptions would be helpful [see the article by Barbara Leff preceding this one].

6. The Jewish Book Council should work with the Association of Jewish Libraries and Boards of Jewish Education to educate professional staff and lay boards about the importance of the library, so that they will elevate the library on the institution's scale of priorities to ensure adequate funding for hiring professional librarians, for maintaining a generous schedule of library hours of opening, and for ordering new books and media.

7. A publication should be prepared which is a handbook for rabbis, administrators, and Boards of Jewish Education vis-a-vis the Judaica library.

8. The information gathered in preparing this report makes it possible to revise the Council's publication Standards for Jewish Libraries, and this should be done, as it was previously, in cooperation with the Association of Jewish Libraries (JWB Jewish Book Council, 1968, 1970).

9. New criteria for citations should be established, with the current level being considered a "basic" citation and with "intermediate" and "advanced" citations being added. This is necessary, since there are such major differences in the size and funding of synagogue libraries. New, higher-level citations would also provide an incentive for libraries to upgrade their collections and operations.

10. Now that this survey has pinpointed libraries which are in need of assistance, the Council should:

(Continued on p. 96)
we informed the congregation through the Temple Bulletin that video-cassettes were being offered, circulation became heavy. Placing a short-term loan restriction on this material became essential. Shortly thereafter, other video items were added. The video-cassette collection is located in an area where it is readily available and visible to our patrons.

The collection now includes additional material on Israel as well as material on Hebrew language self-study, Israel song and dance, Jewish folklore, holidays, and the Holocaust. Again, the same acquisition theory was applied: we have chosen to acquire video-cassettes on subjects that have demonstrated high circulation in the print component of the collection.

Other synagogue libraries may apply the above techniques to build an audio-visual collection and encourage its use. The editor of this column welcomes contributions from librarians who have employed other innovative techniques in the acquisition and cataloging of Jewish non-print media.

Dr. Ralph R. Simon is the Librarian of the Sindell Library, Temple Emanu El, University Heights, Ohio. He completed his dissertation on the acquisition of audio-visual media in libraries at Case Western Reserve University.

References


Marcia W. Posner is a Library Consultant for the JWB Jewish Book Council and Vice President-President Elect of the Association of Jewish Libraries.

If you care about JEWISH BOOKS

For more than 40 years, the JWB Jewish Book Council has been working to stimulate the writing, publishing, and reading of worthy books of Jewish interest. It is motivated by deep conviction that these books make an invaluable contribution to the Jewish people. The Council's many activities include:

- Jewish Book Month, celebrated annually throughout the United States and Canada.
- The National Jewish Book Awards
- The Jewish Book Annual, recognized as the most comprehensive and authoritative survey of Jewish literary creativity in English, Hebrew, and Yiddish.
- The quarterly Jewish Book World with information on new books, available free on request.
- Suggested reading lists on a variety of topics, and much more.

Write for a brochure about the Council and its publications. 1987 Jewish Book Month will be celebrated November 16th-December 16th, and a wonderful kit (posters, bookmarks and publications) is available for $20.00.