



# LIBRARY STAFF NEWS

ISSUE 3

SEPTEMBER 2017

## MOVING DAY AT MGL

August 24<sup>th</sup> was moving day at Mendel Gottesman Library, after the summer renovation of floors 5 and 5A. While the bulk of the shelves remained intact, the reserves, periodicals, and some other volumes were temporarily moved during the construction. Older periodicals and Folio Judaica were permanently relocated to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor, allowing room for the collection to grow. The circulation desk was relocated from the south end to the center of the floor. The new space features additional windows on the north and south walls, along with the floor-to-ceiling windows facing Amsterdam Avenue. There is also a large glass-enclosed seminar room that is wheelchair accessible with seating for 20 and a large flat-screen monitor. There are now both men's and women's restrooms and a renovated staff office is in the southwest corner. We were pleased at the pace of construction, as the architects delivered on their promise to complete work by the start of the fall semester. There was also minimal disruption to our daily operations during the renovations.



Moving Day MGL- 5<sup>th</sup> floor  
Photo: M. Schiffman

## NEW 185TH ST PLAZA

The new plaza between Gottesman Library and Furst Hall is now officially open! (although many have been traversing the barriers to enjoy it throughout the summer). In anticipation of the investiture of Dr. Berman on September 10<sup>th</sup>, flowering plants have been installed. The Plaza also features new tables and large shade umbrellas, along with benches made of wood and natural stone blocks. This was the perfect



185<sup>th</sup> Street Plaza with Umbrellas and Seating  
Photo: M. Schiffman

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place to view the solar eclipse of August 21<sup>st</sup>. Many of the YU community were out with special eclipse glasses and viewing gear to witness this once-in-a-lifetime event.



Yosef Cohen & J.B. Holderness on the Plaza Viewing the Eclipse. J.B. holds a tripod and camera that he used to take pictures of the eclipse and a card with a pinhole to view the eclipse in black and white.  
Photo: M. Schiffman



Using a Homemade Eclipse Viewer  
Photo: M. Schiffman

## DO YOU MOOC?

By Hindishe Lee

When someone hears I'm a librarian, the frequent reaction is:

"Oh, you must really know a lot!"

"No," I reply, "I just need to know *where to find* information!" But in all honesty, the more we know, the better we can serve our patrons. Reference librarians at YU are especially prone to encounter all sorts of questions – anything from translating a rabbinic commentary to figuring out a calculus problem (I can attest to that). Any familiarity with subject terminology can be a great asset:

"I need a peer reviewed article about telomere length..." OK - Biology database!

Besides attending webinars and professional conferences, self-study in any field of knowledge can always hone those library skills. And being "a perpetual student" keeps you feeling young, besides reminding you what it was like being "on the other side of the desk." What if you could take a free online course, listening to a lecture in your comfy slippers and PJs? Well, you can. "Do you MOOC?" may become *the* catchphrase of the academic elite.

MOOC is the abbreviation of Massive Open Online Course - courses open to the public via the Internet. No transcripts to send. Predominantly, no fees required. Simply googling "MOOC free \_\_\_\_\_" (insert your subject of choice) will introduce you to a wide range of learning resources – literature, art, business, math, physics, biology, English literacy, Chinese...

Two prominent MOOC providers are edX and Coursera. While some Coursera courses require a partial fee, edX is without charge. Many of these gratis online courses originate from such esteemed academic institutions as Columbia, Harvard or MIT – even from universities across the globe. Subject difficulty can range from introductory to advanced level. Though you receive no transferable university credit, edX offers a "verified certificate" – for a fee. However, you can simply audit the course for free.

***It is a strange social bond, linking strangers from all over the world by their sheer fascination in the same field of knowledge.***



Each MOOC usually spans a few months. The home page of the course provides an outline of what to expect: subject covered, prerequisite knowledge, beginning and ending dates, expected hours of effort, audit status (free or fee), and participating university.

From my experience, the standard structure of each lesson is a video lecture presented by a professor, followed by exercises to test comprehension, then a set of homework problems. Tests and exams fill out the format – being “open book” to varying degrees. Sometimes an e-book textbook will be available or suggested. But, finding information on the Internet often augments understanding of difficult concepts. A progress chart monitors your scores and grades so you can evaluate your standing as you advance. For math and science, homework and test scores are registered by an electronic grader. Answers are submitted via multiple choice or by inserting numeric responses in the answer box, typically allowing three attempts. One of the drawbacks to this system is the absence of partial credit; finally landing that right formula and calculation but missing by one decimal point will still give you the dreaded “red x”, rather than a “green check”.

One of the star features of online courses is the Discussion Forum. Here you can introduce yourself and meet fellow students from all over the world. You can ask questions concerning lectures or request “hints” for tricky homework problems. Usually the instructor or a TA (teaching assistant) will respond but many times other students will help you as well. It is a strange social bond, linking strangers from all over the world by their sheer fascination in the same field of knowledge. Scanning Google Scholar reveals a substantial amount of academic articles published on the new social phenomenon of MOOC discussion forums.

There are generally three time frames for MOOCs :

- Standard length: Every week a different unit is covered - lectures, homework and exams are all due by a specific deadline.
- Self-paced: No due dates. This is great when you are squeezed for time or have limited computer access.
- Archived – Lectures and homework problems are available but the course is “dormant”. No discussion forum.

#### My MOOC and Me

My first acquaintance with MOOCs was serendipitous. I received an email inviting me to sign up for an online

course - *Teaching Library Research Strategies*. The course was comprised mainly of videos and informal online discussions prompted by the instructor, with a view into some of the newer approaches to teaching library skills. After completing the course, (being a “frustrated physicist”) I decided to search for MOOCs in physics. Thus far, I have taken 13 physics MOOCs (14, if you count the one I repeated – yes, you can repeat the same course). Some have been introductory; others required a solid base in calculus. I have virtually attended the Australian National University (astrophysics), the University of Edinburgh in Scotland (astronomy), the University of Tokyo (Quantum Mechanics of Molecular Structures) and presently, the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne in Switzerland (for more astrophysics).

A few courses from Rice University in Texas were taught by the same professor – for nearly every lecture. This was the closest thing to formally attending a university and I loved it.



#### CAVEAT EMPTOR

My overall experience with these courses has been enriching, informative, even entertaining at some points. That said, I would be remiss omitting some of the pitfalls - namely, times I was ready to either scream or kick the computer. Glitches. Correct answers marked wrong by the electronic grader (no partial credit). Ignored questions or complaints on the discussion forum. (But one professor was particularly diligent and dedicated, accepting

emergency email questions from students and even apologizing after a short absence.) Videos that wouldn't work. Professors with thick accents speaking incomprehensible English. Instructors with illegible or microscopic handwriting. Unclear exam or homework questions. Misleading prerequisite information. And one course that had so many mistakes – of the human and computer kind – it was almost laughable...

But relax – it's free. You can "unenroll" (but it's always best to try and stick it out). No one really cares if you pass or fail – except you. So enjoy. No matter what, you are learning something new. And that will make you an even better librarian – and a winner!



## STRATEGIC PLAN WORK GROUPS

It has been one year since the Strategic Plan has been formulated and work groups were assigned to each of the areas. The reports that follow are largely the result of the reports of the various work groups in these last few months.

### MGL BASEMENT ASSESSMENT

(Moshe Schapiro, Chair)

By Avrom Shuchatowitz

Now that renovation and reconstruction is completed in the Gottesman Library on Floors 5 and 5A, much long overdue work has to be done. About 80 boxes of books that were stolen from the library many years ago, another 20 boxes of books from the Zionist Archives, and many newspapers and magazines were found in the basement. These were finally emptied and the items were placed on shelves.

The next step is to identify these materials and determine whether they can be added to the collection. If they are in good condition, they may be added copies that the library may or may not need, or they may be new items that will have to be cataloged. Additionally, there are several boxes of newspapers still in the basement to be sorted. Priority will be given to fragile newspapers that need better housing, if kept at all.

The Gottesman staff (Leah Adler, Moshe Schapiro, Zvi Erenyi) and Rebecca Malamud met to discuss how to deal with all these materials. Because of limited manpower and time as well as the difficulty of working in the basement in poor lighting and limited space, this is a formidable task that cannot be accomplished by the Gottesman staff alone. They will meet again to discuss priorities and a more practical plan of action.

## DIGITIZATION WORK GROUP

(Deena Schwimmer, Chair)

The aim of the Digitation Work Group is to initiate projects in the Archives and Special Collections that can be mounted online. There are five categories:

### 1) Non-YU archival collections

Small collections may be done internally with the work station installed in the Archives. Perhaps work-study students can be employed. Larger collections that are highly requested will require funding. The archivists will review the grants database and meet with the Provost's Grant Office.

### 2) YU archival materials

Staff has begun to select individual documents, photos and ephemera that they may scan over time. Some audio and video recordings, however, are not supported by the current system. Student publications can be scanned by a vendor if funded.

### 3) Manuscripts

Manuscripts of rabbinic nature may already be digitized at the National Library of Israel. Others require some "creative" funding.

### 4) Rare and Ladino books

About 20 scans of rare books are available and should be mounted on the portal. Ladino books require grant funding and will be included in the proposal to the Grants Office.

### 5) Streaming videos

These are awaiting a plan of action to be determined with the new digital librarian.



*Summer's Over—Fall Semester Begins*  
Photo: M. Schiffman

## INSTRUCTION AND PUBLIC SERVICES WORK GROUP

(Wendy Kosakoff, Chair)

By Hindishe Lee

Developments to revamp and update library instruction and public services are in full swing. SCW librarians and Wendy convened to discuss innovations in the area of teaching. To meet time constraints of SCW's new orientation schedule, SCW reference librarians pooled their talents to create a power point presentation encapsulating a brief introduction to HS Library and basic research skills. Evaluation forms of the session filled out by students attested to the success of the program. John and Wendy are due to give orientation presentations at Pollack.

The Personal Librarian Program continues to show promise. PL's were set up for Kressel Scholars; students were apprised at the beginning of summer. Rina reported one of her students touched base with her and they will meet soon. Several Revel Graduate School students and one professor connected with Gottesman librarians during renovation construction. Three honors thesis mentors (Cynthia Wachtell, Shalom Holtz, Avi Giloni) were contacted over the summer to arrange PL's; Wendy will follow up in the fall.

Improvements to the library website are in the works. Wendy and Shulamis are collaborating to update the HELP site. A Wufoo document was designed for faculty to request library instruction, which is expected to encourage and facilitate utilization of the libraries' valuable teaching resources. Kudos to Rina on the launching of her libguide, "Resources for Science Courses," featured on the library website.

A Libguide was created with guidelines and application materials for the new YU Student Library Research Award. A team of seven from YU library staff (Shulamis Berger, Zvi Erenyi, Steven Essig, Paul Glassman, Stephanie Gross, Elinor Grumet, Wendy Kosakoff) will evaluate the student papers next spring.

Several deans were notified about plans to initiate meetings regarding library instruction. Wendy and Paul connected with WSSW Dean Wozniak and Azrieli Dean Novick. Other deans will be approached in the next few weeks. The overall strategy is to attend faculty meetings to consider how the libraries can assist students in the various programs.

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT WORK GROUP

(Marlene Schiffman, Chair)

The Staff Development Work Group for next year will consist of Marlene (chair), Avrom and Hindishe.

On May 15, Shulamis presented an entertaining Lunchtime Learning session on dealing with library patrons entitled "Treat Them Like Customers: How to Ramp Up Public Service at the YU Libraries." J.B. prepared the flyer.

On July 19, we held a Lunchtime Learning Lightning session with a Skype connection to SCW that was a recap of the June AJL sessions presented by five of our staff members: Shuli, Marlene, Avrom, Deena, and Paul. (Paul's presentation is nicely summarized in this issue by Shulamis, see 7.) Thanks to J.B. for technical support and flyer design.

The next Lunchtime Learning session is being planned. It will be a workshop on the mobile technology offerings at YU such as email, Wi-Fi, YUMobile app and printing, with the goal of personally enhancing staff knowledge and their ability to assist students.



*In Front of Temple Emanu-El on Synagogue Tour*  
 Standing from right: Chaya Sarah Cantor, Yosef Cohen, Paul Glassman, Marlene Schiffman, 2 members of AJL, Shuli Berger.  
 In front: Shulamis Hes



**TECHNOLOGICAL SERVICES WORK GROUP**

(J.B. Holderness, Chair)

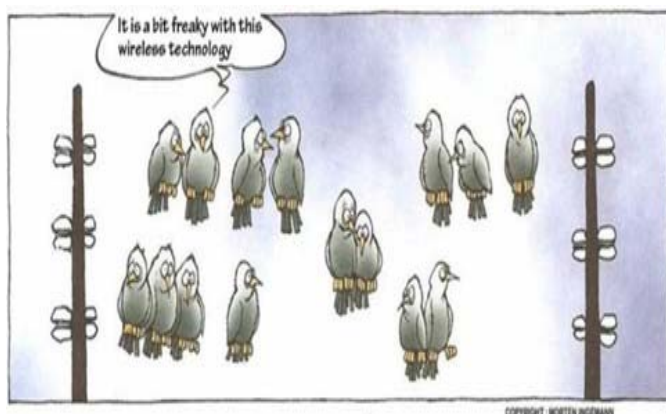
New Xerox WorkCentre 5945 copiers for students and staff were installed in Gottesman, Pollack, and HSL Libraries. Academic Computing assisted us in programming the copier interface to work with the Pharos print release software; now students can log into their printing account via the copier's touch screen (rather than using the external SEM touch screen device). In addition to copying and printing, the Xeroxes also provide the scan-to-USB feature.

A new staff Xerox VersaLink B7035 was installed in Chriss Dalen's office. It has been programmed with staff email addresses to allow scan-to-email. It also has a built-in stapler for collating and stapling copies.

A 65-inch Vizio flat screen monitor and wall mount has been purchased for the newly constructed 20-person glass-walled conference / seminar room on the southwest side of the 5<sup>th</sup> floor along with 25-foot laptop connection cables.

Academic Computing has replaced all HP student PCs in Pollack Library with Dell All-In-One 21-inch screen PCs and 21 are slated for installation in the renovated Gottesman Library. Six new Dell 3020 YULIS PCs will be installed along the south wall, under the new windows.

Replacing old 17-inch monitors in all libraries with 20-inch ones is under consideration. The Work Group is also considering how to meet current student and alumni needs and requests.

**OUTREACH WORK GROUP**

(Elinor Grumet, Chair)

On May 4, 2017, in partnership with the Office of the Provost, Paul organized a faculty recognition event, honoring those who had published books or produced other creative work in the past three years. He also prepared a University Authors Catalog for the occasion. It was all very successful—and is slated to become an annual event.

At the end of last semester, for a month after the end of Passover till the end of the term, HSL aggressively advertised its services on multiple emails to the Beren student body, and its faculty. We also arranged for a slide on the YU flatscreen. Some students came around with questions relating to their term papers.

In the future we'd like to sponsor another faculty lecture, celebrating a book recently published. Any ideas about which book and author, the best time to schedule it (taking into account the upcoming holidays), or the most desirable venue? Perhaps early December on the Beren campus with a Judaic theme uptown in February (perhaps to correspond with the SOY Book Sale).

**INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORY WORK GROUP**

(Paul Glassman, Chair)

The IR will be a priority of the new Head of Library Web and Digital Services. The Work Group has learned that there are viable open-source options that do not require a subscription or license so do not necessitate a huge capital outlay. A committee consisting of librarians and faculty will launch in the fall semester with a central goal of discussing, promoting, and testing an IR.

## PAUL'S TOUR OF UPPER EAST SIDE SYNAGOGUES

By Shulamis Hes

Photos: Shulamis Hes

On June 22 Paul Glassman treated AJL Conference attendees, among them several Library staffers, to an architectural tour of synagogues on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Paul explained the architectural heritage of four prominent synagogues. We saw exteriors and interiors of monumental houses of prayer designed in a variety of styles and embracing both Ashkenazic and Sephardic traditions.

Synagogues visited included:

**Park East Synagogue (Congregation Zichron Ephraim), Schneider & Herter, architects, 1889-1890:** A Moorish Revival, eccentric and asymmetrical edifice with masonry and a terra cotta trim and playfully ornamented façade. The synagogue's former name, Congregation Zichron Ephraim memorialized Ephraim Weil, father of the first president.

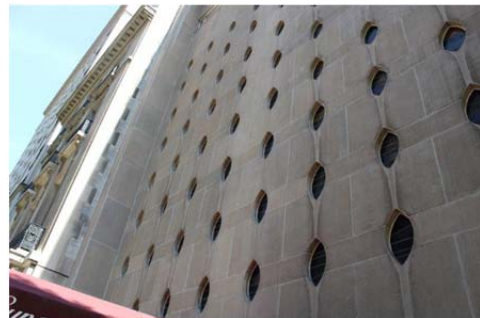


*Park East Synagogue Exterior*

**Fifth Avenue Synagogue, Percival Goodman, architect, 1959:** A Modernist, layered programmatic solution with cat-eye windows representing leaves and peace. These windows appear as columns of plain glass on the exterior but are stained glass on the inside.



*Park East Synagogue Interior*



*"Cat Eyes," Fifth Ave. Synagogue*

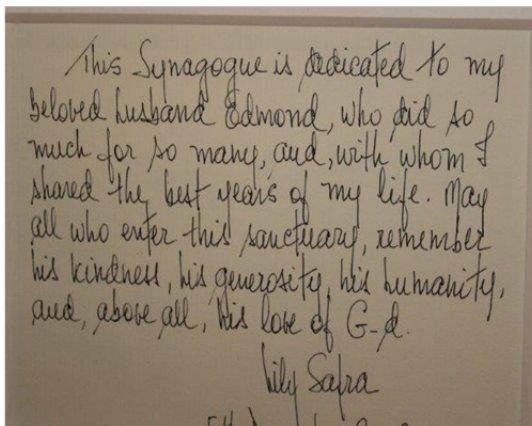
*Above: As seen from building exterior  
Below: As seen from interior*



**Congregation Beit Edmon, Thierry W. Despont, architect, 2003:** A Beaux-Arts Revival structure with Jerusalem limestone, envisioned by Edmond J. Safra and founded by his wife, Lily to fill a void for local Sephardic Jews. During our visit, we partook of fresh bagels and coffee graciously offered from the minyan's daily breakfast.



Above: Photo of Congregation Beit Edmon's namesake  
Below: Mrs. Lily Safra's loving dedication to her husband



**Temple Emanu-El, Kohn, Stein & Butler, architects, 1929:** A Romanesque Revival building, this largest Jewish sanctuary in the U.S. was built by Reform German Jews. In 2004 Beyer Blinder Belle (the firm which restored Grand Central Terminal and the Chrysler Building) began a 2-year restoration project to address aging gutters and roof leaders, water-damage, and built-up grime.

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