

## Collection & Recollection

### Spring Workshop Offers Peek Behind the Scenes of Judaica Holdings

by HALLIE CANTOR Acquisitions,  
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While collection development is the lifeblood of libraries and museums, it is for some a goal in itself, and a labor of love.

The art – and work – of collecting was the subject of NYMA's Spring Conference, held June 5, 2000, at Hebrew Union College and hosted by Phil Miller, Librarian of Hebrew Union College. Three unique speakers, each a collector in his or her own right, spoke of their work, their motivations, and their contributions to the furtherance of Judaica.

#### Loving Tribute

Naomi Steinberger, NYMA president and executive librarian at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, opened with a tribute to founding Board member Sylvia Avner, *a"h*, to whom the conference was dedicated. Naomi spoke movingly of Sylvia's commitment to NYMA, her insightful ideas, and her many years as NYMA treasurer. Above all, she spoke of Sylvia's work as children's librarian and master storyteller.

Steven Siegel, Librarian of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Y, spoke of the many professional years he and Sylvia had shared since 1983, when Sylvia became director of the Y library. They were, in his words, "a perfect match." He praised her skills, experience, and devotion to Judaica and children's services. She was "a constant presence," volunteering up until her hospitalization. To everyone there, Sylvia Avner will definitely be missed.

#### Art of Judaica

In the first segment, "The Adventures of a Book Collector," Dr. Alfred Moldovan, noted collector and physician, gave a slide show of his private collection, with a discussion on the changing view of Jewish art. Judaic artifacts have gained enormous popularity. Over the past year alone, four scholarly books on Jewish art

## From the President

The 2000-2001 academic year proves to be busy and productive for the New York Metropolitan Area chapter of the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL-NYMA). Let me begin by thanking the hard-working and devoted members of the NYMA board. I want to welcome new members of the AJL-NYMA Board: Sara Marcus, Librarian at the Yeshiva University High School for Girls, is serving as reference workshop coordinator along with Yisrael Dubitsky; and Roz Friedman, Librarian at Ma'ayanot High School, is serving as Day School Workshop Coordinator with Elana Gensler.

So far we have had an extremely successful Fall Conference at the Center for Jewish History. Representatives from the resident organizations addressed the group to discuss the cooperation of the organizations from the point of view of the Library. Our thanks go out to Diane Spielmann from the Center, who worked so hard to coordinate the event and was an absolute pleasure to work with.

We have many more events planned for this year. Our Reference Workshop will take place at the end of January, and we have plans for other workshops and a spring conference later this season.

Let me salute our newsletter editors who work valiantly to write, edit and produce this publication and get it to you. We would love to hear from you, our readers. Letters to the editor are welcome, as is your contribution to feature articles and reports of events. In addition, I urge you to think about how you can participate in NYMA. Perhaps you have an interesting project which you have been working on and would like to share your work with others, or you would like to join our NYMA Board for the 2001-2002 year. It is a wonderful professional organization to be drawn into and I urge you to get involved!

Please contact us and let us know your interests. We value your input.

*Naomi M. Steinberger*  
*AJL-NYMA Chapter President*

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have been published: *Talmudic Responses to Jewish Art*, *Jewish Icons*, *Artless Jew*, and a *Festschrift* for the late Steven Kaiser, the first curator of the Jewish Museum.

Dr. Moldovan's hobby began in 1968, when he and his late wife Jean began collecting Jewish items in glass,

(Continued on Page 5)

## Librarian or Educator?

### "Dynamic" AJL Panel on School Resources

by HALLIE CANTOR

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Nowadays the role of school librarian has expanded far beyond the stacks. Often the librarian is a partner in course curriculum, or even an implementer. The changing role of the school librarian was presented to education majors on July 10, 2000, at Stern College for Women. During a panel discussion "The Library and Librarian: Dynamic Resources in the School," hosted by Hedi Steinberg Library and Azrieli Graduate Institute of Jewish Education and Administration, four AJL members addressed the need for rapport between faculty and librarian and the library's task as educational aid and resource center.

Welcoming the future educators was Dr. Yitschak Handel, Director, Azrieli Graduate Institute. He acknowledged that his audience, all of whom were going for Masters' degrees in Jewish education, needed to know how to integrate libraries into their curriculum.

Panel moderator Prof. Edith Lubetski, Head Librarian of Hedi Steinberg Library, stated that libraries are crucial to the academic achievement of a school. She recalled the words of Dr. Stuart Zweiter, director of Jewish Education for the Diaspora at Bar Ilan University, who, whenever he visited a school, would ask to see the library, which he considered the barometer. The better the library, the better the school.

#### Professionalism the Key

Noreen Wachs, Librarian of Ramaz Middle School (formerly of Ramaz Upper School), addressed the group and explained that the library must be run by a professional, since the librarian must know how to carry out the curriculum. At Ramaz the librarian has frequent meetings with faculty of all departments – English, history, Judaica – to discuss what needs to be bought or implemented.

Among the special projects:

\*"Mitzvah Fair." Eighth graders work in pairs to research a particular *mitzvah*. The librarian provides the sources (e.g. *Sefer HaChinuch*) and gives students a lesson in basic research.

\*"History Fair." Students choose areas of interest (e.g., Brooklyn Bridge) and write about it.

\*"Science Fair." The librarian helps students find web sites.

If necessary, books will be borrowed through interlibrary loans. A bulletin board opposite the main office contains the library news, an effective means of communication between librarian and faculty, and a means of reinforcing the librarian as a major presence in the school system.

Ms. Wachs continued with her own insights and experiences. A former high school librarian, she saw how much the high school library was used and needed by the teachers. Librarians

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*Committee chairs are not elected officers. We welcome volunteers; please contact the committee chairs.*

are service-oriented people; it is their job to know the latest sources and developments, and which to recommend to faculty.

Young people, especially, need guidance. At Ramaz Upper School Ms. Wachs helped develop collections with teachers, based on

(Continued on Page 7)

(Collector, cont'd)

librarian of Kushner Academy, in Livingston, NJ, described the making of a brand new library.

The library of the Kushner Academy had its humble beginnings four years ago. The school, originally located in Caldwell, NJ, was smaller, covering grades pre-K through 8. While working there as a volunteer, Mrs. Monchar was told the library needed help. Accordingly, she "volunteered."

In 1996 her position increased to regular part-time. When a high school was added, she became a full-time employee in charge of building a new library. Touring the grounds, she gathered ideas on how to organize, basically relying on the "four B's": building, budget, books, and buddies.

Mrs. Monchar was given a "lavish" budget of \$1,000 which covered not only books, but all library supplies, down to the paper clips. Storage was a problem, as several hundred books had not been cataloged. With the help of parent volunteers, cards were placed in pockets at the back of each book, and eventually the library was automated.

Originally, the library was intended as the focus of the high school. Now, it has become the heart of the entire school. Located in one, beautiful building, it services grades Pre-K through 12, and the Kushner High School Library Fund has increased to \$100,000! This was partly the doing of the principal, who advised Mrs. Monchar, considered the high school librarian, to build up the high school collection.

Relying on the Educational Media Association, Mrs. Monchar talked about the impressive reference collection she had amassed for the high school. About \$250,000 was suggested for a core book collection, both secular and Judaica. Bibliographies are available on CD-ROM.

In spite of the increased financial aid, Mrs. Monchar still does a lot of bargain-hunting. She gratefully accepts donations from school members, who literally went into their basements to search for items. For choice of materials, she relies on AJL and ALA bibliographies, conferences, and online resources. Above all, she directly asks the faculty: What are you teaching? What do you recommend? She will even send out recommendation letters.

#### Show Time

The afternoon ended with a brief question-and-answer period. Dr. Miller spoke about the weeding out of *shaimos*, duplicates, and very old books, largely because of lack of storage space. Dr. Moldovan gave a word to the wise about Internet auctions: "Buying is a visceral experience. You've got to feel it, smell it, even taste it, like silver. As far as eBay and the others, I say: caveat emptor."

Attendees were treated to a souvenir booklet and a tour of his collection, on display at the HUC lobby. The exquisite array of books, maps, and religious items, bespoke centuries of Jewish life and love. Together they make up a collector's dream and a visual finale to an inspiring conference. ☆

(Dynamic, cont'd)

their suggestions for the class as well as for their own work. She often obtain videos for student viewing. In addition, the library contains many Internet sources – e.g., *Proquest*, *Ebsco* – to facilitate searches; students must know about the CD-

ROMs, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Bar-Ilan Responsa*, etc.

The library is also involved in extracurricular activities: the Business Investment Club and the Debate Team frequently come there for research. The Honors Tanach (Bible) class depends heavily on the library for the study of Judaica, especially those who are going to Israel.

How can anyone afford all this? Fortunately, a school library is entitled to state and federal funds. The Avi Chai Foundation awards special grants for high school libraries, both in Judaica and secular subjects. Librarians in New York City's five boroughs have access to the NYC School Library system, run by the Board of Education. Their databases are free to members.

#### Projects & More Projects

Rachel K. Glasser, Librarian of Yavneh Academy, in Paramus, New Jersey, discussed the special projects her library supports. Special projects are emphasized by the dean, who believes that students should not be bored by too much time on their hands. Some include:

\*"Color War." Students on opposing teams will bring materials on a topic – e.g., for Israel a team researched a city or kibbutz; for Jerusalem, songs, posters, and a trivia contest. The librarian may do the preliminary research and coordinate the materials, having them ready for the students.

\*For Yavneh's extensive Holocaust curriculum, eighth graders have required readings. After a particular theme is selected – e.g., Sugihara – the librarian will find at least two books that are suitable. Plays on the Holocaust are performed in the Paramus Theatre and attended by public schools; students come to the library to check background facts.

\*Salute to Israel Parade. Students had to find names of the Hesder Yeshivot, which they included in a float.

\*Original *haggadot*, produced by fifth graders who went to the library to get sources.

\*Mitzvah Project. Students found the sources at the library for certain subjects as *Ishon hara* or *genavas daat*.

\*A bibliography Ms. Glasser compiled for teachers on Jewish values. It includes secular books, which are often better written and illustrated. The younger students might be entertained with a recommended reading of certain books; such as *Forever My Jerusalem*. Videos, however, are generally not encouraged, because of their escapist quality.

\*"Rebbe Reports." Students research a particular Torah leader. Although students are helped by the librarian, they are encouraged to do the research themselves. Fortunately, the school has an excellent *sefarim* collection.

\*Author visits. A talk with a favorite author encourages students to further read materials.

Through a newsletter the library keeps contact with the student body. Teachers are always asked what they need, and students are reminded that there's always room for growth.

#### Hat Act

Susan Young, Librarian of Bais Yaakov of Queens, and Temple Beth Shalom, Roslyn Heights, described how the librarian has to "wear many hats" – coordinator, administrator – at a progressive school. She has to solicit help from the

(Continued on Page 8)

*(Dynamic, cont'd)*

teachers to get the books they need. Library programs included an "author study," where students were asked to research an author, book, or biography. These research skills were taught by Ms. Young at special sessions. In addition she has established bibliographies on certain genres – e.g., historical fiction.

Ms. Young has to labor under a special burden. Most of her students come from large families, who live far from other libraries. A reading specialist who works with teachers, emphasizing certain writers, will get materials together for reading consultants. When a special project is announced, Ms. Young may work with the public librarians, telling them in advance about a project so that materials will be made ready.

As Bais Yaakov of Queens has a full year Holocaust program, projects here may consist of interviewing survivors. Field trips may include a trip to the Holocaust Museum.

Besides author visits, there are raffles for free books, although students need little prompting to read. "Jewish kids," said Ms. Young, "are readers." Nevertheless, reading contests do much to whet their appetites. During a six-day period students devote ten hours to reading. Prizes may

include a trip to Great Adventure.

"It's not easy being a school librarian," Ms. Young commented. "It's virtually a one-man show."

#### Living Legacy

Prof. Lubetski concluded the panel discussion with a story from her own school days. Yeshiva of Flatbush, her *alma mater*, had a Hebrew Reading Program in which students were encouraged to read a certain number of pages in Hebrew. She herself read 8,000, a considerable record.

Then she mentioned her son, who also attended Yeshiva of Flatbush. How many pages did *he* read?

"Come on," she asked the audience. "Take a guess."

Ten thousand? Twelve thousand?

She pulled out her son's record. "He read 32,000 pages."

Once he got started, he got hooked. Reading in Hebrew opened up a whole world to Jewish history and Jewish life. Thanks to this early enrichment, her son knew Hebrew better than most of his classmates, all the way up till college.

The proof is in the program. A good school library, and a good school librarian, can make a difference. ☆

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