

## The Real & the Virtual A Library Displays its Treasures

by LIZA STABLER

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On Thursday, Dec. 13, 2001, AJL-NYMA launched its new year with the fall conference, "Creating Library Exhibits, Real and Virtual," held at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Inspired by the Library's current exhibit, *Micrography: The Hebrew Word as Art*, the conference provided the opportunity for NYMA librarians to learn more about using their libraries' resources to mount exhibits, both in the library and on the Web.

NYMA's new president, Shaindy Kurzmann, welcomed all and thanked Naomi Steinberger, who completed her term as president last June. She also introduced the speakers: Sharon Liberman Mintz, Curator of Jewish Art, Jewish Theological Seminary; and Naomi Steinberger, Executive Librarian, Jewish Theological Seminary.

### Museum Piece

Sharon Liberman Mintz, whose specialty is medieval Hebrew illustrated manuscripts, addressed two general topics: the Seminary's curatorial philosophy and methods, and the micrography exhibit in particular. Mintz's mandate is to create what she termed a "Museum of the Hebrew Book," drawing on the im-

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## From the (New) President

Just over four months ago, the horrific events of Sept. 11, 2001 profoundly changed our lives and perspectives, both as Americans and as Jews. Several of our members were directly affected by the tragedy, especially those who work at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in lower Manhattan, just blocks away from where terror struck. Our first board meeting of the year had been scheduled for that day, but was, fortunately, switched to Monday, Sept. 10. What a sad, dramatic difference a day made. Our hearts are with all of those who suffered such tremendous losses in our area, in Washington, D.C., and in Pennsylvania.

This fall, I took over the AJL-NYMA presidency from the very capable hands of Naomi Steinberger. Together with all of you, I thank Naomi for the two exemplary years of her leadership. Notwithstanding her weighty responsibilities as Executive Librarian at the Jewish Theological Seminary, she oversaw the excellent programming that consistently informed and inspired our members. Many thanks are also due to the concerted efforts of all the members of the Executive Board.

Among our Executive Board's newer members are Roz Friedman, Sara Marcus, Marlene Schiffman, and Chaya Wiesman. Roz, librarian at Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls in Teaneck, New Jersey, joins Elana Gensler as Day School/High School Workshop Coordinator. Sara is our new Reference Workshop Coordinator; Chaya, librarian at the Ramaz Upper School Library, has assumed the responsibilities of Corresponding Secretary. Our newest board member, Marlene Schiffman, Judaica Cataloger at Yeshiva University, will be coordinating the Cataloging Workshop. I look forward to working together with these, our new members, as well as with all of the Executive Board members of long standing.

I am also pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself. I first joined AJL-NYMA in 1984, when I became a Judaica cataloger at the Mendel Gottesman Library of Yeshiva University. I then served on the AJL-NYMA Board as Corresponding Secretary and as Vice-President/President-Elect while working as librarian of the Touro College Women's Division. One and a half years ago, I joined the reference team at the George T. Potter Library of Ramapo College, the public liberal arts college of New Jersey. Retaining and strengthening my association with AJL-NYMA has been most helpful, affording me access to the resources of Judaic collections and the expertise of Judaica librarians here in the New York area. I also greatly value the friendship and camaraderie of our AJL-NYMA members.

Our programming year has already begun with the exciting and successful Fall Conference, *Creating Library Exhibits, Real and Virtual*, held in December at the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York. The speakers, Sharon Liberman Mintz and our own Naomi Steinberger, were superb. They set the high standards that we hope all of our workshops and conferences will meet.

Please contact me to share your thoughts and suggestions on how to make this a most productive year for all of us at AJL-NYMA. I look forward to meeting all of you at our future programs.

Shaindy (Susan) Kurzmann

## WOMAN OF VALOR

**Esther Nussbaum Receives AJL Award for Distinguished Service**

by **HALLIE CANTOR** Acquisitions, Hedi Steinberg Library, Yeshiva University

*In June 2001, one of NYMA's own, Esther Nussbaum, librarian of Ramaz Upper School, was chosen to receive the National AJL Life Membership Award for Distinguished Service. She is one of the fewer than ten individuals to be honored with the most prestigious award granted to a member of this organization.*

*Member for 22 years of AJL and founding member of the NYMA chapter, Esther also edits Jewish Book World, a publication of the Jewish Book Council. Esther has continually dedicated herself to the furtherance of Judaica librarianship. She has graciously allowed for this interview.*

**NYMA:** Congratulations. How long have you been involved with AJL?

**EN:** I've been a member of AJL since 1979-1980, and have been attending national conventions since then. I was one of the founding members of NYMA. Edith Lubetski [of Stern College for Women] was the

founding president. In fact, she and I co-chaired the National AJL Convention that was held in NYC back in 1993. Everyone on the NYMA board at the time was involved. The convention required 2 years of planning and resulted in a hugely successful convention, in spite of the last-minute crisis caused by the first World Trade Center bombing.



Esther Nussbaum (left) at AJL Convention in San Diego, June 2001. With her is fellow NYMA member Marion Stein, presenting the National AJL Life Membership Award for Distinguished Service.

**NYMA:** What made you start NYMA?

**EN:** At the time we were mandated by the national organization to start local chapters.

**NYMA:** The programs at NYMA have certainly been impressive. Other chapters have admired us, and several of their members attended some of our own programs.

**EN:** Well, we have wonderful resources to offer, both institutional and human. We have JTSA, YU, HUC [Jewish Theological Seminary, Yeshiva University, Hebrew Union College] and the many special collection libraries such as the New York Public Jewish Division and YIVO. People attend from the entire Northeast region. Many of the NYMA librarians are experts in their areas of specialization. Librarians come become it's important for networking, for contributing to their own professional development.

**NYMA:** Have we ever done anything jointly with other branches?

**EN:** I'm not sure about all the activities of NYMA, but frequently the day school workshops have been joint efforts with the New Jersey and Long Island chapters.

**NYMA:** What got you started in librarianship?

**EN:** I had received a Master's degree at NYU in English. In the early 70s I decided to go back to school, before my youngest child was born. I decided to go to Columbia University Library School [now no longer in existence]. I finished with my M.L.S. degree and certification both as a biomedical librarian and as a junior and senior high librarian. Then I worked for two years as librarian at Beekman Downtown Hospital [now a division of NYU].

**NYMA:** What attracted you to medical librarianship?

**EN:** Well, my husband and brother are doctors. I knew the literature. At library school, I was introduced to computer searching in biomedical communications. I had a wonderful position at the hospital, but when I was invited to take a position at Ramaz, I agreed, since my children were attending Ramaz, I already had a teaching license [teacher of library], and I would have the same holidays as my children! I started at Ramaz in 1978 and have never regretted my decision.

**NYMA:** You must have seen a lot of changes at Ramaz.

**EN:** I introduced the Ramaz library to computers early on, in 1983 to be exact. Now we're completely automated and on the internet. Librarianship is a profession that's constantly evolving and interesting. Audiovisuals have

gone from 16mm film and filmstrips to video and DVD.

**NYMA:** How did you get started in Judaica librarianship?

**EN:** I had an ongoing interest in Jewish history, Jewish art, and religion. I had a yeshiva background, and was familiar with the texts, so getting involved with a Hebrew collection was not a problem; and I learned a lot at AJL and NYMA conferences and convention sessions.

**NYMA:** What do you see is the future of librarianship? For example, do you think much of a librarian's role is being replaced by automation?

**EN:** Don't listen to the scary stories. I think the service provided by librarians will always be needed. I think that Judaica librarians will always be needed for specialized texts. And students will need librarians for selection and guidance.

**NYMA:** Do you see the nature of libraries changing – for example, more as a repository of information, rather than just a place to read and store books?

**EN:** Librarianship is definitely information science now. There's so much information. Part of a librarian's job is select and authenticate.

**NYMA:** Do you see books being replaced by computers?

**EN:** I'm not Nostradamus, so I don't predict the future. I see reference works being replaced already, but not monographs.

**NYMA:** You're certainly involved in many things, the *Jewish Book World*, for example. How long have you been involved with that?

**EN:** I've been editing the *JBW* since 1994. It gives me the opportunity to combine writing with my interest in art and books. I've been writing on Jewish art since the 1970s. I was a frequent contributor to *AMIT*, the magazine of AMIT Women's Organization.

**NYMA:** What future activities would you like to see for AJL and NYMA?

**EN:** Basically to concentrate on high standards professionally. We must recruit people to our profession in order to fill the specialized needs of our collections. AJL and NYMA must be able to instruct and network to our members and keep everyone informed of the advances in the library field which apply to our work.

**NYMA:** And what are your own, personal goals?

**EN:** To continue to give my best efforts to my profession. It has been extremely rewarding:☆