

Renewal (Not just Books)

Face & Space @ Fall Conference

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Looks matter.

While modern library content has seen its fill of change — e-books, digitization, Twitter — the Fall Conference, held Mon., Oct. 18th, at the Center for Jewish History, showed just how a “facelift” can contribute to a library’s continuity, and just how collections removal—no less than collections reallocation—can lend an aesthetic, as well as intellectual, appeal.

Needing & Weeding

The program began with Sheila Beck and Devin McKay of Queensborough Community College, whose “Spinning Straw into Gold: A Twenty First Century Library Transformation” dealt with the problem caused by lack of space to accommodate the overflow of books in the Queensborough library, which serves a student population of over 12,000, and the logistics of reducing the collection of 25,000 books.

Criteria used to weed books included:

- *Condition;
- *Duplicates;
- *Pertinence to curriculum;
- *How many times the book was checked out over the last century;

*Is it a book already owned by Queensborough?

Lessons learned from this process included:

*People who had remained off the radar in the past came to care about the library when they heard books were being weeded.

*The process took longer than expected, and many more snags than anticipated developed.

*A library can’t have too many book carts.

*Creating more space for interactive learning rather than cluttering stacks to capacity actually made the library a more desirable space for patrons so that gate-circulation and reserve statistics went up.

The success may also have been due to the design of a cleaner, neater, and “cooler” space that became pleasant and conducive to collaborative learning and individual study and was even enhanced by the introduction of a Starbucks. Suddenly the library became a more desirable place for getting and using information.

Although the library was reduced by 25,000 books, some questions about the quality and quantity of kept

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Dr. Walczyk presented a chart of “personas and scenarios” to illustrate the usability of a web site by different user groups. When testing for usability, we were advised that old methods confirm old ways and conceal new ones (we can’t do one because of the other). When considering the librarian’s role in the 21st century, we were told, “Be a verb, not a noun.” Dr. Walczyk can be reached at dwalczyk@pratt.edu and he welcomes your questions and comments.

So Near & Far

In “Staying on the Cutting Edge: Jewish Studies Research in a Digital World,” Michelle Chesner, Librarian for Jewish Studies, Columbia University discussed the wide range of sites for digital research in the field of Jewish Studies. The significance of these sites is the increased availability to researchers of texts and documents that in the past were in locations too remote to visit firsthand. Additionally, the availability of digitized records allows researchers to view multiple versions of texts and documents that might be available.



MS. CHESNER: “The available of digitized records allows researches to view multiple versions of texts that might be available.”

Among the projects and collections Michelle discussed were the following:

- *Israel National Library;
- *Friedberg Genizah Project, digitizing the fragments from the Cairo Genizah; RAMBI for Jewish periodicals;



DR. WALCZYK: “Be a verb, not a noun.”

- *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, which has collected images in all areas of Jewish life in prewar Europe;
- *University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute, which preserves Holocaust testimonies;
- *Vidal Sasoon International Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism, which collects papers, recorded conferences, as well as other publications regarding anti-Semitism.
- *Jewish Women’s Archive;
- *AM Digital-Jewish Life in America;
- *Index to Yiddish Periodicals;
- *EBSCO Jewish Studies Source;
- *Academic Guide to Jewish History;
- *H-Judaic Jewish Studies Network;
- *Some general sites, such as Google Scholar Books and Project Muse.

Past & Future

Following Ms. Chesner’s presentation was Jim Rosenbloom, AJL President, whose “Future Developments in AJL” described the webinars and podcasts that are in the works. He also mentioned a task force that AJL could present to the universities and library

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(Workshop, cont'd from pg. 5)

schools throughout the country to further Judaica librarianship. The transfer of AJL's national newsletter to online form shows just how much digitization has affected all of us, as well.

Attendees were then treated to a guided tour of the past through NYPL's beautiful recent exhibition "Three Faiths: Judaism, Christianity, Islam"—a display of texts tracing and displaying the history, development, and similarities shared among the three major world religions.

Leading the tour was doyen and exhibit co-curator David Wachtel, who appeared upon special request from Ina Rubin. Pausing by each display case, Mr. Wachtel gave over a vast amount of knowledge.

Along the walls viewers read murals that described the emergence of the written text, from the Torah on Sinai through the post-Biblical stages — the Mishna, Talmud, Zohar, medieval commentary. Space was also given to incunabula, products of centuries of Jewish craftsmanship, depicting scenes of Jewish life and ritual.

The star of the show was, of course, The Book—ancient manuscripts, Hebrew scrolls, Arab calligraphy, Christian-European woodcuts of Latin liturgy, complete with illustrations — reminders of a form that sustained civilization thousands of years before Google. For information about this important and fascinating exhibition, go to: <http://www.nypl.org/events/exhibitions/three-faiths-judaism-christianity-islam>.

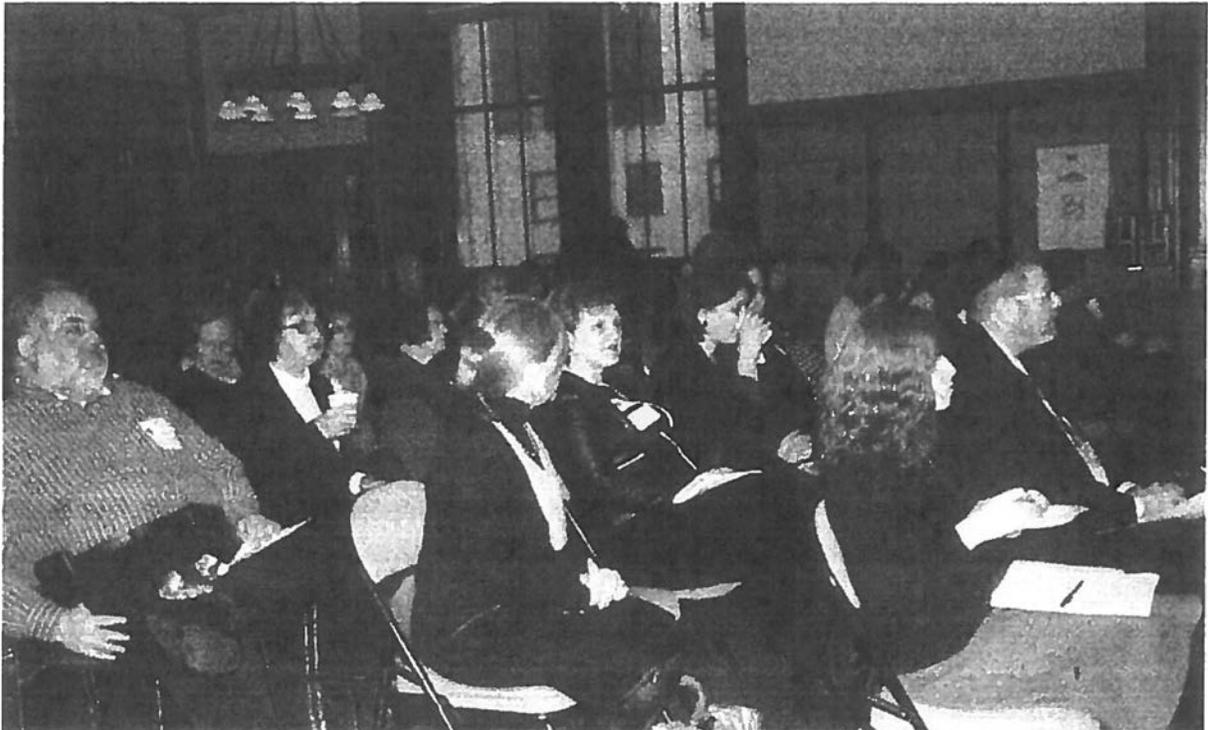
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SPELLBOUND—Attendees enjoyed an informative afternoon of digital science.