

NYMA News

Newsletter of AJL-NYMA

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From the Presidium

Mission for the 21st Century

As librarianship continues to progress, Judaica librarians will strive to keep pace with improvements, technological advancements, and challenges. In this dynamic environment, we at AJL-NYMA aim to provide informal educational programming, local forums for exchange of ideas, and networking opportunities. Success in meeting these goals still depends on strong leadership and involved membership as we look toward the future.

Recent Events

This past February, NYMA ushered in 2014-2015 with a successful Cataloging Workshop on the newly emerging Resource Description and Access (RDA) standard for manuscripts and rare books, with an emphasis on Judaic and Hebraic materials. A lively winter conference held at the Morgan Library followed in March, along with an enthralling exhibit of Judaica texts with illuminated artwork inspired by those texts. Most recently, NYMA hosted the practical Reference Workshop, which focused on the evolution and revolution currently taking place in reference services.

We now have an "AJL-NYMA Facebook Group," searchable on Facebook by its name. This page, established and maintained by **Rina Krautwirth**, keeps members updated about our programming, news, and information, as well as issues relevant to librarianship in New York City and Judaica studies librarianship in general. We would love for you to join our page and contribute as often as possible!

Leadership

From the years 2010 to 2014, **Tina Weiss** (Senior Associate Librarian, HUC-JIR) selflessly led NYMA as president, organizing events for two years beyond her original two-year term! During this time, budgetary constraints resulted in added responsibilities for all our members, preventing us from finding new leadership.

Since Dec. 2014, **Rina Krautwirth** (JTS) and **Chaya Wiesman** (Ramaz) have begun to work with **Ina Cohen** (JTS) to lead NYMA as co-presidents. We are pleased to be able to continue the NYMA tradition of offering inspiring programming, facilitating professional growth, and providing a practical networking forum.

Future Goals

NYMA is too good an organization to disappear! Please work with us, the presidium, to implement our organization's mission, through workshops, conferences, and events, as well as networking with fellow Judaica librarians. Your help, even if limited in time, will greatly contribute to our success. If, for example, you have ideas for future speakers or programs, please let us know! We hope to build on our past strengths to create a more dynamic group for the future.

We thank all our speakers and contributors over the past year for their support, as we plan eagerly ahead for the Fall. May AJL-NYMA continue to go from strength to strength!

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Ina Cohen,
Rina Krautwirth,
Chaya Wiesman

Another Babylon Attraction

From Baghdad to Brooklyn @ Spring Conference

PHOTO CREDITS: The Johanna Spector Papers and Audiovisual Materials, courtesy of The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, <http://jts-spectorarchives.tumblr.com/>.

Archives are the lifeblood of specialized collections, and of preservation itself. Three collections covering the gamut of Jewish culture were given an in-depth look at NYMA's Spring Conference, held Wed., June 11, 2014, at The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: the Iraqi Jewish Archive, the Johanna L. Spector Project, and the JTS Music Archives.

Full Circle

The history behind the first presentation, "Baghdadi Jewish Life Seen through the Iraqi Jewish Archive" – involves a full circle in AJL history. In May 2003, American soldiers found, in the flooded basement of Saddam Hussein's intelligence headquarters in Baghdad, a massive amount of books, documents, and scrolls pertaining to the local Jewish community.

Fast forward to one year later, at AJL's 2004 convention. **Doris Hamburg** and **Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler** of the National Archives described the enormous task to preserve what came to be called the Iraqi Jewish Archive.

Fast forward another ten years. NYMA was thrilled to have **Dina Herbert** – Project Librarian, Iraqi Jewish Archive, National Archives and Records Administration – speak to a well-packed room about its progress. "Even now," Ms. Herbert explained, "it is not known how the material ended up in Mukhabarat," referring to the Iraqi intelligence headquarters.

She took the audience through a digital tour of some items. The earliest among the 2,700 published books was a Bomberg 1525 edition of the Bible. In all, there are tens of thousands of unpublished materials, ranging in dates from the mid-sixteenth to the late twentieth centuries. However, there are no diaries or personal letters.

Secret agent or "thief of Baghdad"? Identities of the original owners remain unknown. More baffling was the eclectic mix of the content, which ranged from the religious to the secular – school records, financial reports, telegrams, hand-written booklets, correspondence (rabbinic, official, business); even taxi receipts!



ORIGINAL SELFIE: Johanna Spector snapped this the old-fashioned way -- mirror and Hasselblad 500C.

The actual preservation work occurred in three phases:

- 1) Initial recovery -- freezing and shipping items to the U.S.; then vacuum freeze-drying once they arrived.
- 2) Identification and assessment – photographing title pages and covers, creation of a database, preliminary cataloging.
- 3) Current phase -- completion of cataloging, stabilization of materials, digitization, boxing, and exhibiting.

Further information about the Iraqi Jewish Archive can be found: www.ija.archives.gov.

Woman of the World

In "Johanna Spector's Life and Work: From Latvia to the World," **Michala Biondi** – Archivist/Project Manager, Library of JTS – along with Processing Archivists **Shira Bistricher**, **Nicole Greenhouse**, and **Cynthia Schwartz**, gave credence to the view that behind every amazing archive stood an amazing individual.

Dr. Johanna Spector (1915-2008) was Profes-
(Cont'd on pg. 12)

Archives & Archivists @ CJH

In "Be Your Own Archivist: Preserving Family Treasures" – held June 17, 2014 -- the Center for Jewish History's archivists showed ways of safely storing family photos, multimedia objects, and other precious artifacts. On June 18, representatives from CHJ's Ackman & Ziff Family Genealogy Institute joined the Jewish Genealogy Society of New York, the German Genealogy Group, and the Italian Genealogy Group to provide behind-the-scene insights into the processes that allow people of any ancestry to search thousands of records. During the panel discussion, moderated by **Moriah Amit** – CJH Reference Services Librarian and Genealogy Specialist -- the audience was given a sneak peek into upcoming projects, and info on how to take part. In "Places You May Not Have Looked: Researching Roots in NYC and Beyond," held June 22, renowned genealogists Miriam Weiner and Avrum Geller revealed important but relatively unknown resources for family-history research. While Mr. Geller focused on the New York area, Ms. Weiner spoke on a number of websites based in the "old country," including archival resources, Holocaust institutions, and others. On August 4-8, 2014, YIVO offered an intensive Archival Research Skills Workshop for historians, archivists, librarians, genealogists, and all who wished to enhance their abilities to work with Yiddish archival materials. Faculty included Cicle Kuznitz, Kalman Weiser, Joshua Karlip, Roberta Newman, and Yakl Salant.

Notice of Changes

The Lucius N. Littauer Foundation has moved to new offices – 220 Fifth Avenue, 19th floor, New York, NY 10001 -- and is pleased to announce that

Alan S. Divack has joined as Littauer's program officer. He can be reached at the following:
adivack@littauerfoundation.org.

Condolences

To **Shimon Vogel**, on the loss
of his father Dan Vogel.

To **Leah Bennett**, on the loss
of her father Dr. Daniel Schechter.

*May they be comforted among the mourners
of Zion in Jerusalem.*

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Committee chairs are not elected officers; we welcome volunteers. *NYMA News* is published twice a year, Winter/Spring & Summer/Fall, by the AJL-NYMA Committee. For questions/comments, contact **Hallie Cantor**, 383 Kingston Ave., #81, Brooklyn, NY 11213, or at above e-mails.



Iraqi Jewish books and documents packed in trunks for shipment, June 2003.

(Spring Conference, cont'd)

sor of Ethnomusicology at JTS, the first woman to be granted the title of full professor at that institution. Born in Latvia, she authored books and articles, as well as produced documentary films with a focus on the Jews of the Middle East and the Orient.

In 2012, thanks to a Cataloging Hidden Special Collections and Archives grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation through a program administered by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), the JTS Library was able to make the archives of Dr. Johanna L. Spector available for research. The team of archivists working on the project, housed at JTS Library, discussed this rich treasure, which includes materials in the fields of ethnography, history, anthropology, and music. In particular, the collection documents Dr. Spector's special interest – the native folk and liturgical music from the nearly extinct Jewish communities of India, Yemen, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Armenia, and the Samaritan people – offering a window before these

communities were eventually influenced by modern cultures and melodies.

The range of items is extraordinary: research notes, drafts of lectures, slides and photographs, reels of film taken during Dr. Spector's extensive travels, rough cuts of her documentaries, audio field recordings, and a number of musical instruments she amassed during her many travels. There are scenes from a Yemenite wedding, research on the Cochin Jews of India, tapes of Jewish music classified by region (i.e. Middle East, Asia Minor), along with tropes and cantillations. There are photos of the Samaritan community, where she had become friendly with their High Priest. Poignantly included are accounts of the Lvov Ghetto, where Dr. Spector, a Holocaust survivor, was forced to reside.

Dr. Spector's history was also part of women's history: a constant globe-trotter, she went to exotic places where free, unescorted females were a novelty. To her, gender was never an issue. She often worked alongside men, much to their own bewilderment. Nevertheless, respectful of cultural norms, she would have a male companion with her when interviewing a man who was uncomfortable sitting with her alone.

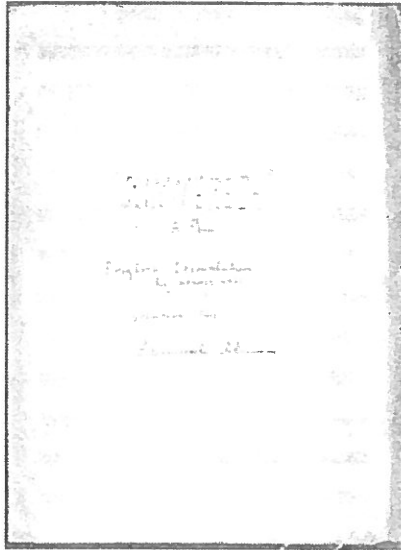
Some of these items were on display during the Spring Conference. Further information about the Johanna L. Spector Project can be found here: <http://jts-spectatorarchives.tumblr.com>.

Two in One

The final segment of the Conference consisted of two presentations: the first, an overview of the JTS Library's archival collections, presented by **Dr. Sarah Diamant**, Administrative Librarian for Special Collections; the second, the JTS Music Archives, by **Dr. Elliott Kahn**, Music Archivist. Both provided ample background to a rich – and richly documented -- history.

According to Dr. Diamant, the JTS Archives, established in 1976, includes over 700 collections. She utilized the diaries of Rabbi Mordecai Menachem Kaplan to discuss personalities and events in the history of JTS and the outside world. The PowerPoint included images from the collections of Rabbi Solomon Schechter (eulogy), Albert Einstein (scientific and philosophical conferences), the Brooklyn Jewish Center (now Oholei Torah), Camp Cejwin, and the contribu-

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Holograph. Kinnereth/music by S. Alman.
London, 1935. (from Jacob Beigel Collection, The Jewish Theological Seminary Jewish Music Archive.)

Spring Conference, cont'd

tions of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rabbi Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel to the Civil Rights movement.

Dr. Kahn presented an overview of Ashkenazi liturgical and Yiddish popular or theater music in Central and Eastern Europe, and the U.S. The music archives consist of the following:

- 1) Documents such as correspondence, clipping, photos, etc. -- described by finding aids available on JTS's website:
- 2) Music scores which are described in cataloging records available in JTS's library catalog and in OCLC.

Many of the early manuscripts came from Germany, and to a lesser degree, Russia, where the Society for Jewish Folk Music, in St. Petersburg, was established in 1908. Eventually melodies and their composers were transplanted – or born – on American shores. Through the use of both Ashkenazic liturgy and Yiddish popular song, Dr. Kahn managed to introduce musical topics to an audience of appreciative non-musicians.

All presentations showed the evolving role of librarian-archivist into a virtual (pun intended) museum curator — preserver of both history and culture. NYMA expresses gratitude to JTS for graciously hosting this event and showcasing their collections. And a big, special thanks to **Naomi Steinberger**, Director of JTS Library Services, for her input, forethought, and cooperation.

NYMA NEWS thanks the following contributors to this article:

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(Reference Workshop, cont'd)

manuscripts like the Aleppo Codex; or Alexander Marx (1878-1953), renowned librarian at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

David also discussed heroes of the library world during the Holocaust – among them Rabbi Efraim Oshry (1914-2003), who compiled responsa in the Kovno Ghetto; and YIVO archivist **Dina Abramowitz** (1909-2000),

who survived the Vilna Ghetto, where the Nazis aimed to create an archive dedicated to the “destroyed race.” As the deportations swept through the streets, librarians scrambled to hide their beloved books. Thanks to their efforts, these items survived.

Ultimately, what all these individuals shared was a love of Hebrew text. Mentioning the Rambam’s famous reverence of books, David explained: the

librarian was a scholar first: sharer, preserver, and manager of knowledge.

The past, present, and -- it is hoped -- future clearly show that the reference librarian isn't going away too soon. Hats may be reshaped or restyled, but ultimately there is one that stays on many a head: provider of information. Thank you, Leslie and Bruchje, for an outstanding afternoon!