

CREATING A CHAPTER NEWSLETTER WITH CONTENT, BITE AND HEARTWARMING CHATTER

Anne Dublin, Ellen G. Cole and Enid Sperber

Description: Do you want to communicate with your chapter members and support their interests? Do you want an effective way to reach other people in your community? A newsletter may be just the means you need to accomplish your goals. You'll learn some basics about writing style, regular feature articles, and layout & design. You will find out about common pitfalls and how to avoid them. We will discuss the "nitty-gritty" of production: computer software (pros and cons), how to plan a reasonable schedule, and the process of printing and distribution. Handouts and sample newsletters will be distributed.

Three presentations will address these topics:

1. Anne Dublin: *An Overview...*
2. Ellen G. Cole: *Focusing on Content...*
3. Enid Sperber: *Focusing on Graphic Presentation...*

AN OVERVIEW...

Anne Dublin

Anne Dublin is Librarian at Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto. She holds a BFA from University of Wisconsin and School Library Diploma from the University of Manitoba. She has been an elementary school teacher since 1972, with specialties in English, French, and library. In addition to teaching and library work, she is the editor of AJL-Ontario newsletter and author of a number of children's and young adult novels.

1. Why should you have a chapter newsletter?
 1. Communication
 - between members of Chapter--to inform, congratulate, publicize events, support their interests
 - in larger community--to increase visibility of Chapter and organization
 2. Professional validation
 - You belong to a professional organization that has not only a national newsletter, but also a chapter newsletter.
 - The chapter is the backbone of a powerful group, not just a number of isolated individuals.
3. Involvement
 - This is a way to involve more members of the Chapter in various activities:
 - writing
 - photography
 - mailing and distribution
4. Membership recruitment
 - Newsletter can be sent out to potential members
 - to illustrate activities and interests of members
 - to give a sense of belonging and community

- II. Who is your audience?
- Chapter members
 - Your boss and other important people in your organization
 - Potential members
 - ????
- III. Style Basics
1. Set up a consistent style.
 - identifies your newsletter
 2. Creates ownership by the group
 - Start each article by convincing your readers that the information is important to them.
 - Vary the types of sentences--assertive, interrogative, exclamatory.
 - Write strong lead sentences.
 - Vary the sentence length.
 - Each paragraph should have 3-5 sentences.
 - Use "delicious" words.
- IV. Tips to Make Your Newsletter G-R-E-A-T
DESIGN + CONTENT + STYLE
1. Publish your newsletter regularly.
 - It usually takes a non-professional writer about 7 hr. to write, proofread, & revise the editorial content for each page of an 8-1/2 x 11 newsletter i.e. a 4 page newsletter = 28 hr.
 - Solution: Get other people to help or hire an outside company to do part of the work e.g. copying, folding, mailing.
 2. Make the newsletter's name an attention grabber.
 - It doesn't have to be generic e.g. NOT: *The AJL-Ontario Newsletter*, but something that makes people notice and remember e.g. *Library Links*.
 3. Headlines are important.
 - Use headlines that are descriptive or catchy.
 - The quality of each headline determines whether the article will be read

How?

 - Tell what the article is about.
 - Focus on a highlight from the article, on what's important.
 - Trim it down to 3-8 words.
 - Make it active, not passive. e.g. "City must recycle waste."
 - Use a complete sentence that contains a verb.
 - Stick to short, simple words.
 - Avoid using words with double meaning. e.g. "Tests show San Diego kids' lead poisoning."
 - Set headlines in big, bold type.
 - Vary size of headlines to make it more interesting and help reader prioritize articles.

4. Type style and size
 - Use only one type style and size for the main text of articles e.g. Times New Roman.
 - Use only 1 or 2 styles of font for headlines & subheads e.g. Arial.
 - Keep the body text consistent to increase reader familiarity with newsletter.
5. Write your articles objectively.
 - Don't write from only one point of view.
 - Write objectively, like the articles in a newspaper.
 - Base articles on factual information. Check facts!
 - Write as if you were a neutral third party.
 - When you insert opinions into your stories, make them into quotes and attribute them to the proper people.
6. Write to express, not to impress.
 - The purpose is to communicate.
 - Keep writing casual, non-technical, and conversational.
 - Be careful of acronyms. Make sure readers know what they stand for e.g. CLA = Canadian Library Association.
7. Vary the length of articles on the page.
 - Start with three columns per page design. Then you can vary the number of columns for each article i.e. one, two, or three.
8. Proofread, Proofread, Proofread.
 - Your newsletter reflects your professionalism--of your chapter and its members. Make sure it:
 - looks impressive;
 - contains polished writing;
 - is free of typos and errors.
 - Don't depend on spell-check for everything!
9. Use at least one graphic per page.
 - photos
 - artwork
 - clip art
 - charts
 - pull quotes
 - drop-caps
 - captions
 - even white space

Why?

 - Graphics, along with headlines, are the first things that readers are drawn to.
 - They provide much-needed visual breaks from solid blocks of text.

10. Sharpen your photos.
 - Draw in readers.
 - Make newsletter more personal.
 - Make newsletter more visually exciting.
 - Add credibility.

How?

 - Plan ahead for photo opportunities and bring your camera to all chapter events.
 - Include space for photo and captions.
 - Make sure captions are accurate.
 - Use image-editing software to sharpen your photos e.g. Adobe PhotoShop.
 - Scan all photos in grayscale at 300 DPI & 100% of the size in .tiff.
 - Adjust contrast, color, and brightness levels of a scanned photo before inserting it into the layout.
11. Get the best quality print.
 - Every time you make a reproduction, you lose some quality compared to the original.
 - Try to use the best printer and photocopier if you're doing it yourself OR
 - Save on a disk and take to a professional print shop.

FOCUS ON CONTENT...

Ellen G. Cole

Ellen G. Cole is the Librarian of the Levine Library, Temple Isaiah, Los Angeles, CA, and the in-coming president of Association of Jewish Libraries of Southern California. Ellen just finished six years as co-editor of *Library Light*, AJLSC's newsletter. She is a regular columnist for Temple Isaiah's Bulletin, *The Isaiah*. She is also a well-known reviewer of Jewish books for children and adults, immediate past Chairperson of the AJL Sydney Taylor Book Awards, and a speaker on children's books and creating home Jewish libraries for the Jewish Community Library of Los Angeles. She has judged *Shofar* magazine's annual essay contest. Ellen received her MA from Johns Hopkins Nitze School of Advanced International Studies and her library training at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles.

Chapter newsletters with credible content, bite and heartwarming chatter need something to say, someone to say it and someone to see it is said well and on time. If this was as easy as it sounds I'd sit down now. You know the hoary motto : all the news that's fit to print. How about the hairy question who will print - nay who will write it?

The biggest secret for success is to develop sources for the content of your articles. Listen at meetings; there is gold in throw away lines and asides. For example: Heidi and the National Council of Jewish Women's Reading Project . In the issue of 2/01 we ran a full page story with a picture, based on a quiet aside at the new business section of a meeting. Or the spectacular article by Grace Friedman on the Founding History of AJLSC in the 4/01 issue based on a throw away line in a heated board argument. Scour the

agenda and board minutes for ideas. For example, Hannah and the Russian Jews at her LAPL Branch.

Use newspaper and magazine articles. You get better in depth stuff in a well researched print article. Be sure to get Permission. When we saw the Allegra Goodman article in *Pakn Tregor* of the

National Yiddish Center the assistant editor said yes, but let me check; the editor said no, we paid a fortune for it on condition it was one time only publication. They told us to go directly to the author who at first wanted to charge us a fortune and finally after weeks of back and forth agreed to give it to us free as a Jewish Book Month gift if we advertised her new novel and if the publisher could write it! We said yes and voilà the terrific lead story in the 12/97 issue. *Library Light* editors had to edit the publisher's publicists, but we got the quality we wanted.

Use Inter-Net information, especially background articles or essays. Don't assume everyone saw it. Even if they did, it is more than OK to reprint relevant or new idea items. The variety of articles in each issue reveals the wide interests of Jewish Librarians and our intellectual curiosity. Remember your newsletters are on-the-record records of your chapter and our profession.

Something To Say:

Or the terror of what will I put in this issue? My strongest caveat: DO NOT assume the full membership knows what the board knows. Old Business is news. The content will suggest the type of article. As I discuss the types you can search in our various copies of *Library Light*. The dates I give as examples will refer to the newsletter's publication date. I know you have different issues. Variety is half the fun : search and share with your neighbor.

Types of Articles:

News: This will include your chapter, other chapters, national, the wide world of Jewish Books, Publishers, Libraries, Librarians, and Schools. Don't forget the city where you live : for ex. LA & the electricity crisis (p.2 of the 2/2001 issue involves a first generation son of Jewish immigrants). News feeds lead articles and what's up potpourri.

Calendar: includes what's on now, what's coming. Could it be class, a meeting, a vote for a new board, an article deadline. Don't skip this because you think it is obvious or dull; it is neither. This is action stuff that matters and if you consider it filler it will be reflected in your article and impact selling your programs. It's one of the hardest articles to do because of fact checking.

Events: Member's individual library programs and programs in city, in the public library system, the national convention. Examples for AJLSC are: The People of the Book, LA's JCC's city wide annual book festival; or the Jewish Community Library's Jewish Stories on the Radio. The wildest was an Art Museum Exhibit - the Huntington Library's blockbuster Alexander Kruse show which introduced a Jewish artist unknown to us. A few phone calls meant we discovered he was also an author of a novel about a Jewish artist and that his son Ben is also a writer and who was happy to speak to us about the biography he wrote about his father. He became our speaker in 2/98 and we became the wiser about the Ash Can School of Art, Kruse as muse to Ben Shawn and scenery painter for Oscar Hammerstein Sr.

Chapter Programs: such as General Meetings or our Mini-Regional (2/96). Announce the new and write up old. Include forms for programs as our Sign up for the Valley Jewish Festival Booth, the Chapter Scholarship Grant to Convention, the form to fill out and pay dues to Join, our annual Book Drive for LAPL, a plea for donations to send to the host Convention city to help with their costs.

Jewish Book Month: What is everyone doing in their libraries? This story gives credit and shares ideas. We do an annual Jewish Book Month Journal with a paragraph for each member's library. The news often runs to three pages; see the example in the 12/2000 issue.

Reviews of Books and Videos: Adult and/or Children; ours is usually adult. The book reviews are developed in essay form since the National Newsletter tends to quickie paragraphs. We also cover movies, TV-shows or Videos about a book or a librarian (ex. *Party Girl*). We print interviews with authors (ex. Dershowitz is 12/99).

Opinions and Reactions: Letters to the Editor, for example the issue of 9/97 when the *Jewish Journal* ran a long article praising Jewish books only from the perspective of a retail store and ignored Jewish Libraries and Librarians. In the 2/98 issue - our lead refers to "this is not the year to be out of town for Jewish Book Month" re a *Jewish Journal* feature article by their editor who found such fabulous celebrations of JBM in many cities outside LA and never interviewed, sampled or noted one of us!

How To's: Announce and Write up Classes : Your chapter, (Book Repair), Local College or University(Bible), National (Convention's >For Credit= classes as Tales or Reference). Do specific articles on a focused topic as how to catalog problem titles. We faced the question of automating your library very early with a groundbreaking series by Barbara Leff in 1996-97. Print Library Lessons for a Day School Setting. For ex. we did Cinderella Stories in 2/2000 and Tu B'Shvat in 1/1997.

Heart means People and naming people gives credit for work and accomplishments of members. Give thanks for volunteer efforts. Spice up news and events with human interest biographies. You can do this with:

Awards from your Chapter: We have the AJLSC Dorothy Schroeder Memorial Award for outstanding contributions to Judaica Librarianship. From National: AJL Life Membership or Other Honor, National Office on the Board or special committees. Is the Sydney Taylor Award winner or runner-up a local author or illustrator? Local or National Prizes not from AJL. For ex. Adaire Klein and the Simon Wiesenthal Center won the National Institute of Museum and Library Service Award for National Community Service in June 2000. Suzi Dubin - in 12/1998 - won the prestigious and lucrative Milken Distinguished Educator's Award.

Deaths: Obits give fascinating lives with connections. Famous Jewish authors and publishers are moving; there is more fun in the infamous. For example, in 10/2000 the retired Webster Dictionary editor-in-chief, David Guralnik of Cleveland died. He had revised the dictionary to put in ain't and pull out kike and nigger. Could he have been at Convention in Cleveland? We look it UP & YUP! A speaker! Or another example, in 2/2001 the Superman Publisher died just as the Pulitzer Prize went to a novel about Jews creating Comic Books. Lastly, although it is sad, print supportive notes if it is a member or member's family who dies. AJLSC went through Sharon Blumenstein's last illness with supports and tributes in every issue for a year.

Personnel: Run promotions and job openings. Don't forget chapter membership statistics : are you growing? By Individuals or institutions?

Personal: Show you care! Mazel Tov for Weddings, Bar/Bat Mitzvot, you name it, we laud it. Print thanks for good deeds and donations. Send wishes for speedy recovery and bid farewell when members move. Try a career review when members retire. (See our examples with Barbara, Hava, Judy Katz, Harvey, Rita). Highlight members if they are chosen to speak at a Conference: National or Regional such as the CA School Library Association or for a JCC or Jewish Community Library program.

Biography of a Member: Especially when a chapter member is your general meeting's featured speaker. Ex. Enid Sperber's one woman show in 12/99 spotlighted her family history as well as her prior career in acting in stage and on TV. Who is the new member? Who just won an award? Special projects for chapter, national or other groups will need leaders and these librarians make good biographical copy.

What Do You Do All Day That I Don't: Careers beyond synagogue or school libraries. Ex.: Consultants or Rare Book Dealers.

Using Reprints: Colleagues essay from another source such as my trip to Jewish Turkey in 10/97 or Adaire's Life in Work in 2/01. If an outsider article grabs you, grab it, give it a tie to your chapter and go! For example (and these are a few of many): Free Web not so free with solid information (Found on the I-Net 10/99 by Enid); Tracking Down a Correct Title (Hasafran 3/98/Enid); My First Book Case (Essay from the *Los Angeles Times* 12/99 -I found this); Time for Jews to Buy VW's (*New York Times Magazine* 11/98/ me); Books or Computers (*New York Times* Op Ed 9/96/ Adaire); Jewish Children in Picture Books (*Five Owls* 12/00, *Library Light* 4/01 found by Lisa Handelman) and as already noted, My Favorite Book (*Pakn Tregor* 12/97 found by me).

Someone To Say It

For this you need to bug, beg, plead, scream, cry and threaten, and in person. We tried cute handouts to remind of due dates for deadlines :NADA. We had more luck with fill- in questionnaires on topics like Jewish Book Month.

Usually the person who offers the handout or announces news is a good source to hit to write the story for you : ex. Grace and history. Often the issue staples are the hardest to get: Ex. President's Message; Meeting Dates or Speaker Titles even though the program has been set for months! Promise By-Lines : they are a plum as well as a way to share the work. Draft a person for a specific topic especially if they are involved with the news or activity. Assign on a regular basis and then Nag etc: For example: go to each program chair : what is on and what happened? Have the treasurer send information on donations : who gave what to whom and why. The membership chair can easily supply up-to-date membership stats and interview new members when they join.

Someone To See It Is Said Well And On Time

Boring Basics: Check facts, grammar, spelling - especially of member names and institutions. Check, double check and recheck facts even if for a title : ex. We wanted to call a program on rare books ASo Rare@ which I thought was a lyric to a swing song. Enid got onto the Inter-net and found the lyrics in 3/98 on her first try! Use full names with proper titles. Ask what each individual wants: ex. our member Dubin uses Susan in by-Line, but Suzi when referred to in an article. Use names a lot, people like credit. Be sure to background. If the person is a winner : did they win before, what? How many times?

Give your chapter news its proper slant - TIE EVERYTHING IN. We front paged a National Convention Report from the point of view of all our members who were there.

Who is speaking and who is listening, who is an officer? Were the Sydney Taylor or Jewish Book Award authors or illustrators local. A strong tie in can allow printing of a general Jewish story, although we often got flack if the details were not strictly Judaic Librarianship. For ex. my 11/95 article on Jewish Day Schools, which I found on a trip to Moscow in 9/95, came at a time when a lot of us were moving from Religious School to Day School libraries and I felt the broad story was relevant. I discovered the article in an English speaking Russian press about parents turning to ethnic day schools for quality education; sounds similar to US parents.

Watch Your Timing. We made an unintended error when ran a special article by the Schwartzes on their rare book business in the same issue where we advertised the next meeting where a competing dealer was our speaker and they felt his coverage was giving him unfair advertising. Don't forget timing when it comes to art. See our logo : Our menorah branches vary for Hanukkah. Regulate each issue's release; AJLSC mails in time to invite members to the next General Meeting. This saves postage on separate invitations. We also provide information on the speaker, directions and parking. As the year's schedule needs them, insert forms for dues or scholarship grants to save on separate mailings.

Be Lively! Add Librarian or Jewish or Jewish Librarian jokes : either verbal (Cold Cones) or drawn cartoons. We spiced up the necessary nag about due dates with a changing poem so we would not be totally ignored. For ex:

Put away the matza
Pull out the bread
Leaven your food and
Leaven your head
Pick up your pen and please do write
Your rising thoughts for Library Light

Thank you and Good Luck!

GRAPHIC PRESENTATION...

Enid Kent Sperber

Enid Kent Sperber was a professional actress for 35 years before she discovered Judaic librarianship. As an actress, Enid appeared extensively in all mediums from stage to television. She has been the librarian and archivist at Temple Israel of Hollywood for the past nine years. She serves a population that includes a K-6 Day School, a Nursery School, Religious School and adult learners. This year her congregation is celebrating its 75th historic year as "Filmland's House of Worship." Enid has been on the Board of the Association of Jewish Libraries of Southern California for eight years. She served on the Travel Subsidy Committee for national for two years under the direction of Harvey Horowitz and is currently Chair of that committee. Enid knew absolutely nothing about creating a newsletter before she began her tenure as co-editor of AJLSC's *Library Light* six years ago.

As I looked back to the beginning of my tenure as Co-editor of AJLSC *Library Light* in preparation for this workshop, I realized the enormous changes in computer technology and graphics capabilities that have taken place in the last six years. I knew nothing about newsletters when I agreed to this volunteer position. My friend, Ellen Cole begged me to do it with her, so I said yes.

At the outset neither of us knew anything about computer graphics programs so we hired the services of a library student to do the layout for us. Logistics became a major issue. The three of us did not work or live close to one another. A printer was chosen who was near none of us. What is wrong with this picture? We struggled with the first 3 issues and then I decided that I needed to take over the entire process even though it necessitated learning how to do everything myself. Shortly after struggling through

two more issues I met Philip Gordon, a desktop publishing expert who agreed to help me for a very modest fee and dinner! Phil Gordon became the *Library Light* angel for 5 years. Phil set me up with a version of QuarkExpress, a program expressly designed for desktop publishing. At the beginning we spent many hours of the first issues on my learning how to work the program. The most creative part was came in the graphics and Phil Gordon spent countless hours donating his time to AJL's Southern California chapter by making sure my graphic presentation was the best it could be. He created our logo with the menorah, our fancy Magen David, as well as the templates for each page including the pagination.

I purchased a Clipart program at Costco that contained over 125,000 graphics. Choosing the graphics was quite a challenge to my eyesight and I always had to have a magnifying glass nearby. Collected graphic images in books are printed extremely small to get many on one page. Not all the graphics were satisfactory. Some pictures would not print uniformly and looked awful so another image had to be chosen. In addition I needed to acquire another program called Corel Draw to be able to manipulate and change the images creatively. Corel Draw is essentially an artist's "canvas" and once the drawing is complete, the "canvas" can be imported (transferred) into the newsletter document. I am not an expert in any of these programs by any stretch of the imagination. I know how to work them for my limited purpose. I always needed to have Phil around as final arbiter and consultant as well as to get me out of the various jams I found myself in as I navigated this foreign territory. Luckily he was always a phone call away.

Using the same image in each issue is a good way to familiarize your reading audience with regular features. Some always stay the same for each issue others change. We began to create a unique

graphic to advertise our general meetings and placed it on the back page on the outside opposite the address. We looked for images that fit the topic of the meeting. Each issue would contain a review of the past general meeting so the back page graphic was re-used in the body of review article as a visual reminder of what we had done in the previous issue.

Photographs presented special problems. Ellen wanted more photos and I did not. The reason was simple. We xeroxed our newsletter. With a readership of 80, printing would have been too costly. Xeroxed pictures do not turn out very well. For our first issues we used veloxes. Veloxes are used by newspapers to print photographs. A velox is a picture that has been reduced to tiny dots in order to print better. Even the veloxes, however, couldn't overcome the poor quality of a xerox. Phil had a scanner and would occasionally take photos to his place, scan them to a disk and bring them back to put into the newsletter. About two years ago I got a scanner. Hurrah! Now I was free to use any image I found without "sending out" for a scan. For a recent presentation of the History of the Jews of Los Angeles, I was able to scan an old photograph of the first Rabbi in Los Angeles from a book. Technology has sped along in six years and now there is free clip art all over the web. When the AJL convention was to meet in Washington I found an image of a horse drawn tourist buggy in front of the White House. A word of caution about using cartoons and images printed in books. Ellen was very careful to obtain permission to reprint an article printed elsewhere. We were not so careful about the cartoons hoping that with out limited readership no one would contact the copyright police.

Variety creates interest. Put boxes around text. You can use circles, bolded lines, double lines, ellipses or fancy lace trim around text to help it stand out. An image put behind text is also interesting. For instance, in an article about flying to Washington we added an outline of an airplane behind the printed words and this year for traveling to La Jolla we chose a car to put behind the announcement. In newsy sections with people's names or other areas where acknowledgement is necessary, bolding the names is a technique to allow people to quickly read about themselves or find information about others. My use of bolding was judicious however, and I usually reserved the technique to denote AJLSC members only.

Every issue had some regular features, so once those were established I could immediately drop new text into the framework in exchange for the old. Ellen did all the work in securing the articles and editing them. When the newsletter content was complete Ellen gave me a disk with a few creative suggestions for the "look" of certain articles and I handled the rest. Details must be looked at over and over. Your newsletter requires reading and re-reading up until it goes to the printer. Ellen proofread on her end and checked all the spelling twice but often in computer translation from hers to mine certain items got lost. The most important advice I can impart is to proofread, proofread and then proofread again.

Library Light is a 12 page newsletter printed on 11 x 17 sheets of paper. Several times in recent years we have had more material than our usual 12 pages and we have had to expand to a 16 page issue. Why 16? Can't you added another page? The answer is no. Another page of text requires three more pages of text to fit another unit into 11 x 17 pages. It is essential to engage the services of a reliable printer. I used a synagogue member who gave us a special price and was available to help

with glitches. Xeroxing always had its problems so the issues did not always look as good as when they came off my printer but I always requested the high quality xerox machine and I was pleased most of the time. I had the printer's staff fold each page in half and I did the collating at home to save money. I also printed the mailing labels. It is most important to always check with your membership chair before each mailing for addition or deletions to the mailing list.

Finally, on occasion forms need to be included in the newsletter. By forms, I mean important announcements or invitations that need to be filled out and returned. There are three important things to remember about forms. If you will be using a form again the following year (such as a membership renewal), create it and keep it on your computer or on a disk so that it doesn't need to be re-created each time you need it. You must also decide on placement of the form. Will it be an insert or will it be put into the body of the newsletter? If it is included in the body of the newsletter you may lose valuable information on the verso. Some people may want to keep their issues intact so make sure that the information printed on the verso is light and unimportant so it is ok to lose. Both forms and additional pages add weight for postage. Make sure you take a sample to the post office and weigh it or use a postal machine. You don't want your newsletter to be returned. Please make sure the mailer's address is on the outside so that if a return does occur, the recipient's address can be corrected and the issue can be re-mailed.

The latest technology is now allowing all of the forgoing processes to be done on the Internet. Many of the techniques I have talked about today can be readily transferred to a digital environment. I expect the labor intensive and expensive process of printing, collating and mailing to become a thing of the past as more and more newsletters make their way onto the Web. Creating or maintaining a chapter newsletter is a rewarding process. Good luck with your efforts.