

**DESPERATE STRAITS :
MANAGING THE JEWISH ACADEMIC LIBRARY
IN CONDITIONS OF FINANCIAL RESTRAINT**

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Description: Based on the experience of over two decades of work in non-profit Jewish academic libraries in the United States, and the collective wisdom of others, the author addresses approaches and measures that allow a library to provide as generous as possible library services to the community of readers. The limitation of funds dictates 1) necessity of multiple ways of fund raising; 2) efficient use of professional, paraprofessional and voluntary staff; 3) rationalization of library automation; and 4) assessing and reassessing changing needs of the reading community. All these factors need to be addressed first of all by a library director, but not only by the library director. Without the support of administration of an academic institution, its board of directors, library committee, friends of the library and the large community of supporters, all the efforts of the dedicated librarian can be tried in vain.

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This is not an academic lecture. Everything I am going to tell is based on my own experience and experience of some of my colleagues in great Jewish libraries I happen to work for the last forty years, and especially in the present period.

My involvement in library works started in 1962 when I, then student on Department of Classical Philology, was encouraged by my teacher Dr. Alexander I. Zaitzev to visit the Library of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) to help the librarians to decipher and to identify undescribed Latin fragments, the task I found interesting enough to devote to it several weeks.

About 1964 for my academic practice for the Department of Semitic Studies in then Leningrad University I was placed in M.E. Saltykov-Shchedrin Public Library (now Russian National Library) for work with Hebrew manuscripts under guidance of Dr. V.V. Lebedev. Instead of short academic practice I worked there for two years reading, describing and researching Hebrew manuscripts of Abraham Firkovich collections.

In the spring of 1965, I was approached by the authorities of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad with the offer of the joint library position in the Institute of Oriental Studies Library and the Library of the Academy of Sciences. Although I was offered entry level, I realized very soon that I had an entire responsibility for big and neglected department of Hebrew and Semitic collections of the Academy of Sciences with over half a million printed books (in Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Tat, and other Jewish languages, as well as in Syriac) and up to 5,000 manuscripts (from which about 2,000 were Jewish).

To make long story short I will tell that in 7 years I arranged the Hebrew books in alphabetical order in 4 formats (by size), I described printed books in a card catalog, I prepared for publication a catalog of Hebrew incunabula, and described over 300 Hebrew manuscripts. Accordingly I was promoted 4 times from library assistant to Curator of Hebrew and Semitic collections.

In 1972 I immigrated to Israel, where I was accepted to the faculty of Haifa University, where among other things, I taught different courses in Jewish librarianship. In 1979 I was approached by Dr. A. I. Katsh, a former president of Dropsie University to head the library of his institution, which I accepted. I worked in Dropsie University Library (now Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania) until 1982. Since 1986 I work in the Gratz College Library (for last years Tuttleman Library of Gratz College).

Thanks to my experience for nearly forty years, I felt all the hardships of inadequate funding, insufficiency of staff, unrealistic and wrong presumptions of institutions' administration in addition to natural disasters. In every place I tried to counteract all the difficulties and searched for the ways to minimize the negative sides of the situation.

Working in Russia under strict communist rule, I was limited in exercising broad activities (the only initiatives permitted were those coming from the top down), but even there I was able to recruit several volunteers to assist with the physical and manual jobs, to get some library equipment not ordered by my administration, to organize preservation and binding of thousands Jewish books and newspapers, to dust the books which during the W.W.II were used instead of sand bags for protection of the building from German bombs, to answer questions of private citizens who were not fellows of Academy (and actually were not permitted to contact me directly without the note from my superiors).

It would be imagined that the conditions in library work in Free World and especially in the United States supposed to be much better, and they are actually better, but not in every aspect. As I arrived to Dropsie University Library in 1979, I found out very soon, that funding of the library was not only inadequate, but almost not existing, we had difficulties even in obtaining office and library supplies, donations for the library were accounted to the general funds of the institution, and it took great efforts to convince administration to allot misery sums for new acquisitions.

The library was catalogued following an antiquated Freidus system of classification, there were thousands of uncatalogued books inaccessible for patrons. They included several private libraries of the former professors and Board members, as well as parts of the libraries of Isaac Lissner and Judge Mayer Sulzberger. Some of these books were acquired in the beginning of the 20th century, but were not only uncatalogued, but even were not accessioned. But worse of all was the situation that I had only one part time cataloger (paraprofessional) and this was in the condition of manual cataloging. During my term I involved into library work several volunteers again to assist with the physical and manual jobs.

Here for the first time in my life, in defiance of my personal feelings, I initiated fundraising. I approached several wealthy members of Dropsie University Board of Governors, [among them

Frederick Mann, Isadore Kirshner, Thomas (former Tomashevsky), A. Wood, etc.], gave talks in Locust Club, Philadelphia, I went to talk to the Friends of Dropsie University and several other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations. In every meeting I spoke about importance of Hebrew books and manuscripts and about the needs of the library. As a result of these fundraising activities, library started to receive some money, which were spent mostly for paying the staff, purchasing books mostly those ordered by professors. I also approached Dr. Laurence Marwick z"al, a graduate and former professor of Dropsie University, who in this time was the Head of Hebraica Section of the Library of Congress. He was kind enough to supply a big stock of the printed cards for our Hebrew books, some publications of the Library of Congress, thus facilitating the change from Freidus system to the LC classification. During my term I was able to transfer to LC system only a small part of library holdings (somewhat between one and three thousands). We supplied a copy of each cataloging to the Union Catalog of Philadelphia libraries which was physically located in the building of the Library of the University of Pennsylvania.

During my term I made several exhibits from the antiquities and books of the University, which also promoted the library and contributed to a greater interest to it. We also participated in the exhibitions of other governmental and private institutions providing some items from our collections.

Some of the contributions we received from non-Jewish contributors. With these contributions, we were able to accomplish the project of preservation of some 500 Cairo Genizah fragments. Previously, under leadership of Dr. Abraham I. Katsh, they were put under glass and framed, which were extremely unfriendly to patrons, since they could read only one side of the document. Moreover sometime in one frame were more than one leaf and only one side of the first leaf was accessible. Working on the program we discovered some fragments as large as fifty three leaves. We were able to put each leaf of entire collection in a transparent non acid envelope in such way that all the leaves could be read from both sides. This arrangement also allowed microfilming Genizah fragments without damage to the worn leaves. We provided two copies of microfilms of entire collection of Genizah fragments to the Institute of the Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem. Since then the use of these materials increased enormously. I was able to identify some additional Genizah fragments and to add them to existing B. Halper's catalog.

The situation in Gratz College was slightly different when I started in 1986. The library had less books than in my previous libraries. However the use of the library was on higher scale. The library suffered from insufficient funding and incompetent administration during many years. Nobody knew how many books are in library holdings. The last shelf reading was done in 1916. There were thousands of uncatalogued books, especially those in Yiddish as well as printed books, manuscripts and audio materials in the Music department. Also the building of the College was located in the North Philadelphia, Olney section, which in this time was real crime area. In the beginning the library employed one library clerk and two library assistants, but very soon their jobs were cut, and the library remained with the staff of two professional catalogers and two paraprofessional librarians.

Some of the head librarians had more luck than others in convincing the administration to provide students for library work. In total the number of students varied from 3 to 0. Working up to 20 hours weekly, students mostly shelved books, shifted books and in some cases arranged

book cards in shelf list order in circulation area. The great challenge that the library faced was the move of the library to the new campus in 1989. All the move was realized by the library staff with no outside help. The great organization and planning of this move secured the relocation of the library and the preservation of the order on book shelves.

The insufficiency of professional staff was somehow alleviated by automation. First OCLC was introduced for cataloguing in 1983, then in the beginning of the 90s RLIN started to be used for cataloguing of Hebrew script materials.

Most of the library books were in LC classification system, some were cataloged using LC printed cards, but the majority of the books cataloged since 1983 on OCLC with full sets of cards in dictionary catalog and in shelf list catalog.

Much later in the beginning of the 90s on-line systems became fashionable in the libraries. This was really a torture to look into many competing systems and to know you can not afford them. Then to look into the cheapest of them and to find defects, insufficiencies, shortcomings and bugs in most of these systems. By opportunity, the Windows version of Aleph was accepted for the library, but since the company did not continue the technical support of PC version, we abandoned it in favor of a cheaper and more adequate for small academic libraries MANDARIN library automation system, which after several updates became very useful tool, at least for usage as on-line catalog and circulation. The acquisition system still needs improvements. All the bibliographic records made on OCLC and RLIN were imported into MANDARIN.

With the introduction of MANDARIN we closed our dictionary catalog. Thus we cut time and expenses connected to ordering full sets of cards and for filing cards. The dictionary catalog is still available. We didn't dismantle it. We need to keep this catalog until all the bibliographic records will be included into our on-line catalog. This can be accomplished with the completion of barcoding which is in the advanced stage. At the completion of barcoding we would be able to know how many books and other holdings we have in the library. Now we are close to 50% in barcoding. The barcoding in the initial stages was done only during one summer by the entire staff of the library with the help of a few volunteers. Since then it is continued by two catalogers. If it will be continued in the same tempo, we can expect completion in five to ten years.

There are some thoughts to make our on-line catalog available through Internet. Technically it can be done very soon. However we are cautious to make public bibliographic records many of which were obtained by non-critical copy cataloging.

Previously our cataloging has been divided between two big library networks, RLIN for Hebrew script materials, OCLC for the rest of materials. From this year we consolidated cataloging using only OCLC. The positive developments in increase of cataloging connected very much also to human factor. The rate of our cataloging increased dramatically, even only two catalogers are on the staff of the library. The replacement of one cataloger dramatically changed statistics of cataloging. Now we are in advanced period of training of the third person to perform a copy cataloging on OCLC. He will be a part time cataloger, working also in acquisition and ILL services.

The problems of such academic library as Tuttleman library of Gratz College are mainly connected to insufficiency of funds, which dictate a limitation in full time professional staff, non existing support staff, replaced with a small number of volunteers, and very limited acquisition funds. In the last years there is a marked tendency of decreasing number of users.

To increase the membership in the library several measures were instituted from the beginning of the 90s.

1. Any member of Jewish community of Philadelphia was enabled to use the library for very low yearly fee. Beginning this year the membership in the library is free.
2. We established a new collection of videos, which attract some readers and very actively used.
3. From time to time we make exhibitions connected to particular topics: we exhibited twice some of our fine collection of Passover Haggadot, we made exhibits of printed works of Gratz College Faculty, Israeli art in Gratz holdings, Dreifusiana (towards 100 anniversary of the beginning of Dreyfus affaire); on history of the Sephardic Jews of Curoçao, etc., to name a few.
4. Gratz College Library instituted an annual book award competition in a particular area of Jewish Studies (which is decided in consultation between a librarian and the president of the college). This is judged by a panel of internationally known judges. The library receives at least one copy of each book submitted for consideration of the judges. The library maintains an exhibit of the books submitted by the publishers seeking the award.
5. The free reference service was introduced. This has been provided in three different ways: a. through personal interview, b. by phone, c. through e-mail. The reference librarian receives the queries either to his e-mail address or to special e-mail address which we created for the information desk
6. The last measure of fundrasing are sales of postcards with photos of some rare items from Tuttleman library of Gratz College. We have now a half dozen of such cards. Photographed by Dr. Susan Rosenbaum, M.D., the first lady of the College, who happen to be a talented photographer, they attract attention of some contributors. This way of fundrasing is quite new. We are not aware of particular results.

On completely different note, I should admit the acts of charity of the members of Philadelphia Jewish community. The library receives every year about a quarter of its acquisitions from contributions of private citizens. Many books donated by the families, when they move to other address or when owner of books dies. However we have cases of absolutely unselfish and generous contributors who donate new books to the Tuttleman library of Gratz College. This way we save ca. 25% of our acquisition budget.

To solicit some funds the library applied several times for particular grants. To my knowledge, only two times we were successful in getting some money. The most successful case was the grant for conservation program received about three years ago. With the help of this grant we were able to preserve several dozen of our rare books printed mostly in the 16th and 17th

centuries. We planned originally to preserve about 400 rare books. The conservation proved to be very slow process, and the actual time of the program exceeded all the plans. When you have chosen a conservation company, you are on mercy of this company, and if this company has problems so do you. Now near the completion of this project, we can see that only about one quarter of the projected number of rare books will be preserved using the cheapest materials for acid free binding and archival boxes.

Despite everything I stated above, there were many advantages to the library. It holds some unic and specific collections that could attract both the students and researchers. First I should mention a small, but very nice collection of rare Hebrew books. Of course it cannot be compared to big collections such as JTS, HUC, Harvard or Yale universities, but Gratz collection which was formed mostly from the books of Gratz family of Philadelphia, Mayer Sulzberger, Isaac Lisser and later contributors at the end of the 19th century, includes several books from the beginning of 16th century, such as Constantinople edition, *Hilkhot Rav Alfas*, 1508-1509, parts of Constantinople edition, Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, 1508, several books printed by Daniel Bomberg between 1518 and 1548, including so called Rabbinical Bible (Ketuvim, 1518-19), very early editions of several philosophic and grammatical works, mostly Hebrew translations from Arabic, a large number of Mahzorim from 16th to 18th century (e.g. Sabionetta-Cremona edition of Ashkenazi Rite, a number of Amsterdam printings of High Holidays liturgy, a large number of Sultzbach Mahzorim, Bohemia and Moravia Rite, with early Yiddish translations; a large number of liturgical works of Wolf Heidenheim printed in Redelheim between 1800 and 1865). Sabionetta-Cremona edition of Ashkenazi liturgy can provide for a curious researcher a laboratory to reconstruct the objections of the Catholic Church to the tenets of Judaism. The book is heavily censored by the papal censors.

Rare Book Room houses also rare Judaica in Latin, German, and English, printed between the 16th and the middle of the 19th century, including a number of early American printed books on Jewish subjects, as well as works of Judeo-Christian polemics and apologetics. Our library possesses most of the life time editions of Moses Mendelson's works as well as some works of Christian hebraists.

On the second place are very important collections of Jewish music which include not only books and scores, but also musical recordings of different types, records of 78, 45 and 33 r.p.m., CDs and manuscripts of scores. Among the books, I should mention 8 volume edition of Benedetto Marcello's musical notations of Hebrew Psalms in the way how they were chanted in Italian Synagogues at the second half of the 18th century, the complete synagogue services of Salomon Sulzer (1804-1890) in Vienna and Louis Lewandovsky (1821-1894) in Berlin, besides great number of original liturgical music from Salamone de Rossi (Mantua, 16th -17th cent.) to David Finko (b. 1936 in Leningrad, Soviet Union, currently resides in Philadelphia). The library possesses a great number of the original scores produced by Petrograd Society of Jewish Music in Petrograd (now St. Peterburg), Berlin and Tel Aviv documenting lifetime activities of Joel Engel and a monumental edition of Abraham Zvi Idelsohn's Jewish Oriental songs. Of course, we also collect contemporary Israeli music and music of the Jews in diaspora.

Another nice collection is about 500 Passover haggadot, from 1712 to 2002. In this collection we have original Amsterdam edition of Solomon Proops, complete copy, with the woodcuts and the map of Palestine divided to 12 tribes of Israel. This collection is proud to include the first

haggadah printed on American soil, New York, 1836-37, we also have a large number of facsimile editions of illuminated manuscripts and early printed haggadot, as well as haggadot with translations into many Jewish and non-Jewish languages, including some European and of Asiatic languages.

Some books placed in the Rare book on the reason that they have autographs of the authors or famous personalities. We have autographs almost every important Hebrew and Yiddish writer, from Bialik and Tchernichovsky up to contemporary period and of many of Israeli statesmen, such as David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Yitshak Ben-Zvi, Zalman Shazar, and others.

Hebrew part of the library is very strong. I would say that 25% or 30% of all library books are in Hebrew encompassing Hebrew literature from the Bible up to most modern Israeli writers and poets.

When we are stepping outside of Rare book room we notice very large collection of Holocaust literature as well as that of Jewish history in Israel and diaspora. Holocaust was important area in Gratz College studies, since one of the pioneers of Holocaust research, the late Prof. Nora Levin taught there. And if I already mentioned Holocaust section in the library and the name of Prof. Nora Levin, I should mention another enterprise which connects the library with the subject of Holocaust.

In 1979 Nora Levin, the author of the seminal work, *The Holocaust*, 1969 (10 years on bestseller list) and Professor of History at Gratz College, founded The Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive, the unic organization which seeks to record, preserve and make available for study the testimonies of those who experienced the Nazi era, 1933-1945, in ghettos, camps, labor brigades, resistance forces, national armies, in hiding, in rescue operations and as refugees.

This Archive was one of the earliest collections of Holocaust testimony. Prof. Nora Levin died in 1989, but the process she started was continued under leadership of Mrs. Josey Fisher. All the work performed by volunteers, 60% of whom are survivors of Holocaust themselves. They come every Tuesday.

Since 1979 there were interviewed more than 800 survivors residing in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. The interviews were recorded on audio-cassettes and gradually retyped on hard copy. The volunteers edit the typescript. Of course, during the editing many questions are raised. Since survivors came from over a dozen countries, their testimonies include a lot of foreign words. The words in many foreign languages, the names of officials, the terminology of Nazi or Soviet regimes, geographical places, and sometimes even the meaning of the sentence, everything of this should be verified and commented. And here the library help comes. Hundreds of reference questions are answered and translation of foreign words and sources of verification are supplied.

When a transcript is edited and retyped, it is given to the cataloger, who catalogs it on OCLC, using as much as possible LC subject headings. This way the bibliographic records make the testimonies accessible to researchers outside of Gratz College Library. Since 1996, the Archive contributes to U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Research Institute in Washington, D.C. a copy

of each audiotaped interview with the typewritten transcript and summary. The originals of the audiotapes are preserved in the Rare Book Room of the library. The staff of the Archive considers themselves a part of the Special Collections of the Tuttleman Library of Gratz College. Physically the Archive is located on the territory of the library.

Together with the Archive, the library contributes to preservation of the memory of the victims of the Shoah. In addition to work with the staff of the Archive we frequently have students of Philadelphia schools and colleges who work on various projects connected to Holocaust studies. We advise them and provide help in searching the appropriate materials.

We possess substantial collections in most of aspects of Judaism and Jewish education. Library also takes care of Cental Agency for Jewish education. These books not only cataloged by the Tuttleman library cataloger, but also included in our on-line catalog.

In the last period new media and Internet are actively used in the library, by librarians, teachers and students. All members of Library staff are proficient in use of CD-ROMs and are able to help readers with advice and demonstration of computer work.

Our new head librarian, Mr. Eli Wise tries to create new connections, to increase membership of the library in several professional organizations and to establish reciprocal agreements with other libraries in the region. He also participates in some fundraising activities. Several of these activities involve publicity efforts. We are preparing some programs which will be publicized by local newspapers and radio stations. Presently thanks to Mr. Eli Wise we increased use of our ILL sevice. Previously this was done manually, now it is done electronically which accelerated the delivery of printed materials to readers.