

The Jewish National & University Library

reflections on the past – plans for the future

by
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Description: The JNUL is today the largest repository of Jewish resources in the world. The paper will describe its development from its inception over 100 years ago and its mission as both a National Library for the State of Israel and the Jewish people, as well as being the main humanities research library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The various departments, archives and services will be described with a virtual glimpse into the closed stacks. The second half of the paper will go on to discuss the challenges faced by the Library as it enters into a new and revolutionary stage: the proposed separation from the Hebrew University, and its re-creation as a true National Library. Amongst the issues already facing the Library are the questions born of digital publications vis a vis the law of Legal Deposit, its relation to the Israeli internet, preservation and protection of both traditional and electronic resources. The JNUL has in the past devoted itself chiefly to its archival function; the new era will bring increased activity to attract both local and remote users to discover the Library's resources, and to further its participation in Israel's cultural life.

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Firstly, I'm very pleased to be here and to have the opportunity to familiarize the American Jewish library community with the JNUL. And to those of you who do already know us, I hope that you will learn something new. The JNUL is part of the global village and more aware than in the past of the need to forge links with colleagues in other countries and in the Jewish world in particular. I

see our participation in this important annual conference as a major contributing factor toward this end.

We will look at the library from three different perspectives; its history, which is so interwoven with the history of modern Israel; its mission, and its various collections and services; and the future scenario.

Picture Jerusalem in the second half of the nineteenth century. You will see a dusty, medieval province of the Ottoman empire. The Jewish community, the Old Yishuv, is only just beginning to settle outside the walls of the Old City, and the spirit of the Enlightenment is a matter for grave suspicion. But, it is the period of the earliest pioneers and the seeds of modern Zionism have been sown. A printing press has been in action since 1841 and the first Hebrew newspaper, HaLevanon appeared in 1863.

The second to be published was Havazelet, when, 1872, there appeared an article under the caption Kol Koreh by Reb Yehoshua Heshel Levin of Volozhin, calling to establish a treasure house (Bet Ozar) that would contain all the dispersed books and manuscripts of the Jewish people. The editors of Havazelet, notably Yisrael Dov Frumkin, took up this idea enthusiastically and appealed to the Jews of the Diaspora for support. In 1875 the first attempt was made to establish a library in honour of Sir Moses Montefiore's 90th birthday, but within a year the founders had to admit defeat in the face of vociferous opposition from

the ultra-Orthodox leaders in Jerusalem. Here you can see the proclamation claiming that the library had brought in "sifre minim veapikorsin, karaim, mesitim, misionarin..." (in other words books containing polemics, heresy and missionary material) and strictly forbidding anyone to enter it. This was signed by a number of leading rabbis and was subsequently reissued with additional signatures in 1904 and as late as 1927.

It was not until 1884 that another attempt was made to establish a library. A group of intellectuals, notably Eliezer Ben Yehuda, had arrived in Jerusalem, and once again the idea began to take root to establish a library that would encompass a complete collection of the Jewish written legacy. The new library, called Bet Hasefarim Livne Yisrael, was housed in a couple of little rooms in Jaffa Street and opened to the public for two or three hours a day. It contained about a thousand volumes, and there were constant attempts to encourage people to donate books. This too provoked the wrath of the ultra-Orthodox, but this time financial realities forced the library to close its doors, as announced by Eliezer Ben Yehuda in Hamelitz (1st Aug. 1893).

The turning point came in 1892, when we can see the National Library of the Jewish People was actually established. After a period of planning, the Jerusalem lodge of Bene Brith opened a library, named Bet ha-sefarim Midrash Abarbanel (echoing the fact that it was the 400th anniversary of the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain). In order to succeed it had to have the determined support of a number of public figures such as Zeev Herzberg, Yisrael Dov Frumkin, David Yellin, Avraham Moshe Lunz, Ozer Docv Lifshitz and of course Ben-Yehuda. Most importantly, a member of the Hovevei Zion movement, Dr. Josef Chasanowich of Bialystok, having visited Jerusalem in 1890, made the decision to devote himself to the cause as his contribution to the revival of the Jewish people in its ancestral homeland. After his return to Bialystok he set about collecting the books which he would later ship to Palestine, around 9,000 titles. Over the years his managed to collect, buy and then donate some 16,000 titles. But that first shipment really formed the core of the National Library as we know it. A suitable building now had to be provided; a site was chosen in Ethiopia Street, and the cornerstone laid in 1900. Despite great financial difficulty, part of the building was completed in 1902, enabling the Library to move there. By now it had a new name: Bet hasefarim ha-kelali livne Yisrael birushalayim - Midrash abarbanel ve-Ginzei Yosef - in honor and appreciation of Chasanowich - and over 22,000 volumes. The building was known as Bayit neeman. It was also a popular cultural center, attracting large numbers of visitors and offering lectures in various subjects. Over the next few years many more books were added, sometimes complete libraries. In 1903 there was an appeal, signed by noted scholars such as Solomon Schechter, Israel Abrahams and others to every Jewish author to submit an obligatory copy. Zionist societies in various cities established committees to encourage support of the Library and it seemed only natural that the Zionist Organization would also begin to view the Jerusalem Library as a part of the national Zionist endeavour.

As we all know libraries are not merely collections of books. There were also concerns about the professional quality of its services. In 1905, Prof. Heinrich Loewe, a German Zionist and librarian at the University of Berlin published: *Eine juedische Nationalbibliothek*. Not only did he formulate a plan for the Zionist Organization's role in the Library's future, but stressed the importance of academic professional standards for its organization. He also proposed the establishment of a Library School.

Indeed the 7th Zionist Congress in Basel adopted a motion calling for the establishment of a Jewish National Library, of which the Midrash Abarbanel

Library would be the kernel. Although a committee for this purpose was set up, little progress was made. During this period constant appeals were made to Friends of the Library in various places. Josef Chasanowch continued to lobby for Zionist Organisation to take responsibility for the Library, pay its debts and complete the still unfinished building.

By 1913 we begin to hear of a new element in this story - the idea of a Hebrew University. At the 11th Zionist Congress Chaim Weizmann, Menahem Ussishkin and Heinrich Loewe declared their public support for the Library, which they saw as an essential component of the new University. At this point the Library held over 32,000 volumes, mostly Judaica and mostly uncatalogued. But then came the terrible war years of the First World War. Jerusalem was cut off from Europe, its residents suffering extreme poverty and privation. The Library went into a period of stagnation.

But this period too came to an end. The Turks went, the British came – but more significantly for our purposes here, this also marked the beginning of the Third Aliya, an influx of chiefly European immigrants, many of them highly educated. The proposal that the Library should be transferred to the Zionist Organization was revived and after a short period of negotiation with Bnai Brith, a formal agreement was signed on 11th October 1918. In July of that year, the cornerstone for the Hebrew University was also laid on Mount Scopus. During the years that ensued, until the university's official opening in 1925, the Library began to prepare itself for its role as a university Library as well as a national one.

The first step in this direction was the appointment of Prof. Shmuel Hugo Bergmann as Director in 1920. A librarian by training, and a philosopher with vast knowledge in both Jewish and general fields, he set about expanding the collections – by appealing to individuals and groups, and by establishing Friends of the Library committees in many European countries and the States. By the time he retired in 1935, the Library's holdings reached some 300,000 volumes. Also the proportion of Hebraica and Judaica vis a vis the whole collection dropped to about 40% as opposed to almost 100% in 1920.

Two collections should be mentioned here, that of the eminent oriental scholar Ignaz Goldziher, opened to the public in 1924, and the priceless manuscript collection of Baron David Guenzberg. This collection, containing about 2,000 mss. had been purchased by the Russian Zionists in 1917 for the Library. The revolution and ensuing war prevented its removal to Jerusalem, and in the aftermath, the Soviet regime consistently refused to give permission, resisting even an entreaty by Allbert Einstein to release the manuscripts. In the year 2003, we are still waiting

Acutely aware of the need for professionally trained librarians, Prof. Bergmann even sent some workers abroad for the training they could not yet receive in Palestine. The main card catalogue of the Library was instituted: Name and Title catalogues for each of the main character sets, Latin, Hebrew, Arabic and Cyrillic (romanization was not to be used). With the adoption of the Dewey Decimal System, it became clear that the numbers assigned for Judaica were highly inadequate. Professor Gershom Scholem, the great scholar of mysticism, who was also head of the Judaica Department undertook the task of expanding these numbers to give detailed cover. The booklet we all call "shitat Scholem" , published in 1927 is still in use to this day.

Another landmark was the publication of the first issue of Kiryat Sefer, the bibliographical quarterly of the JNUL in 1924, under the editorship of Professor

Bergmann and Haim Pik. Kiryat Sefer reflected the published output of the country as well as current Judaica acquisitions from other countries. It also included until 1994 (vol.65) review articles. It has appeared without a single interruption to this day. Also, since 1926, the JNUL has been a repository library for the League of Nations and subsequently UN publications.

The library was still housed in the very modest quarters assigned to it in Ethiopia Street, with the addition of a few equally unsuitable premises nearby. The time had come to provide a permanent building (or what was thought to be permanent) within the new Hebrew University campus on Mount Scopus. This was made possible by the estate of David Wolffsohn, the second president of the Zionist Organization. Nonetheless, funds still had to be raised from other sources. I'd like to quote from one appeal to the "friends of Jewish culture" in the USA:

"After centuries of waiting the Jew is returning to his ancestral home. The beginnings of a new life in Palestine are already evident in definite material progress. The body of a Jew may be said to have found a footing, but the Jew's soul still remains a wanderer. It is only in the establishment of such spiritual and intellectual centers as universities and libraries devoted to ancient and modern Jewish learning that the Jewish soul will lose its restless character".

The cornerstone was in fact laid in 1926 and the opening took place on 15th April 1930. This impressively designed and positioned structure houses the Faculty of Law today.

The consolidation of the library's position as a national library and as the university's central library grew stronger from year to year.

In 1935 Professor Bergmann retired to be succeeded by Prof. Gotthold Weil who served in this position until 1946, by which time, there were almost half a million volumes. Prof. Weil concentrated on restructuring work processes, such as separating acquisitions, cataloging and public services. He also developed services to the wider public, such as a free reference service, links with libraries of the kibbutzim and moshavim, professional guidance, and the opening of branches of the medical library in various part of the country. The Yeshurun library was also a kind of branch being a more convenient venue for the Jerusalem public.

In the face of the completely inadequate acquisition budget for new purchases, many efforts were made to acquire books from the estates of Jewish scholars. Large quantities of books, the property of German Jews who could not take them with in their flight from Nazism arrived during the 30s. Also noteworthy was the gift of Hebrew incunabula from Zalman Schocken, and the collection of Italian ketubbot from Mordechai Chamitzer.

After the war, when it became clear that hundreds of thousands of books, stolen by the Nazis from their Jewish owners, had been discovered in various places by the Allied forces, the Library together with the University sent a delegation under the auspices of the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Committee. The delegation consisted of Gershom Scholem, Avraham Yaari and later Shlomo Shunami to gather and sort them. They were also charged with trying to locate legitimate owners or communities that might have a claim. Of the half a million books to Israel, the JNUL distributed some 300,000 to libraries of cultural, religious and educational institutions. The remaining 200,000 became a part of the JNUL's collection and were immediately given very minimal cataloguing. Their full bibliographic treatment continues to this day. Books were also rescued from other endangered communities – in North Africa for example. Books and manuscripts also found their way to the library with the mass immigration of Yemenite Jewry, known as "Magic Carpet".

The catastrophe of the 2nd World War was quickly followed by Israel's war of Independence, which was to have a huge impact on the fortunes of the Library. During 1947 the journey up to Mount Scopus was becoming increasingly dangerous, The Library moved its card catalogue and those books ordered by readers to two of its "branches" in the city, the Yeshurun and the Eitingon Library in Talbieh. But by the following year the Mount Scopus campus was completely cut off and various buildings around the city were urgently sought to provide refuge for the library. It is difficult to imagine the conditions of those days. Without a proper home and most of its books, the library struggled to provide services, even as the battles raged and many of its workers were mobilised to the Hagana. The first shipment of books rescued from Europe - about 100,000, which arrived on the first train from Tel Aviv after the siege of Jerusalem was lifted, also had to be absorbed.

As it became evident that there would be no return to Mt. Scopus, at least in the near future, a way had to be found to retrieve the bulk of the collection still there. This was done gradually if not stealthily via the armed convoys

allowed up to the mountain under the auspices of the UN. Fortunately the books and manuscripts had been protected from possible harm during the fighting, though some items were damaged by pieces of shrapnel. By mid 1949 the Hebrew University made its temporary home in the Terra Sancta College building and with the return of some normalcy, and under very adverse conditions (the Reading Room had enough places for 50 people only) the Library continued to function for the next 12 years. - even flourishing under the leadership of Dr. Kurt Wormann who was appointed Director in 1947. The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 now gave new meaning to the idea of the National Library, and by 1953 the Legal Deposit Law was passed (based on that of the Mandate period), though the new Knesset was not about to promulgate a National Library Law which would have defined the Library's legal standing and provided for direct governmental funding. One of Dr. Wormann's most important initiatives was the establishment of the School of Librarianship of the Hebrew University in 1956, of which he also served as the head until his death. This was to produce a whole new generation of Israeli trained librarians, from whose ranks the JNUL continues to draw its staff members - whenever possible. Wormann's contribution towards the planning of the current building on the new campus at Givat Ram was also critical.

The building is one of the finest examples in Israel of the International Style of architecture of the 1950s. Designed by a team of seven architects, it is directly influenced by Le Corbusier, with its clean horizontal lines, rounded pillars, recessed glass walls, and spiral staircases. The cornerstone was laid in 1957 and in 1960 the Library moved in. To jump forward a little to 1984, I would like to mention the addition of the impressive stained glass windows by Mordechai Ardon which were added to the entire wall of the first floor, and constitute one of the largest such works in the world. Dedicated to the vision of Isaiah it has three parts - the first representing the paths taken by all people to Jerusalem. The middle section shows a part of the Isaiah scroll, together with a number of kabbalistic elements and the third is the realization of the vision - of the swords beaten into shovels (rather than ploughshares).

During the decade of the 60s a number of important enterprises were added to consolidate the JNUL's position as a leading Judaica resource. Such departments as the Institute of Microfilmed Manuscripts, the Hebrew Paleography Project, and the National Sound Archives were established. The Library received the Martin Buber Archive and in 1969 the Shalom Yahuda Collection, containing thousands of Hebrew and Arabic books and manuscripts.

The Laboratory for Restoration and Preservation was opened, and in 1969 the first issue of *Rambi* appeared. We should also mention that the AACR2 cataloguing rules were adopted and followed fairly strictly, apart from some notable deviations.

At this time the Library still acted as the Central Library for the entire University, including the Medical Library. Acquisitions for all the Departmental Libraries were processed here, and then catalogued and classified. All received a JNUL shelf number, and were entered by hand in the inventory books.

Once again the fate of the Library was about to be determined by the cataclysmic events constantly marking Israel's history. The victory of the Six-Day War meant that Mount Scopus was again in Israeli hands. Rapid decisions were taken by the political echelons of the time, and plans for building the new Hadassah Hospital and a new university campus on the old site were laid. The result of these plans was to split the functions of the University, so that the Faculties of Arts and Social Sciences with their accompanying research institutes would be housed on the new campus. To serve the needs of the undergraduate students of these faculties, a state-of-the-art open shelf library was erected. The JNUL remained in its home on Givat Ram together with the Science Faculty, but physically separated from its natural community, and from those departmental libraries with whom certain resources had hitherto been shared. I might add that the enormous amount of funding needed to pay for the running of the new campus put a huge strain on the finances of the Hebrew University and the JNUL, like other departments, after a few years of expansion especially in terms of manpower, began to suffer the negative effects felt to this day.

As time went on, the centralised cataloguing of books ordered by various libraries gradually decreased, though the acquisitions processing for all university libraries is still handled by the JNUL. This is slated to come to an end with the establishment of a central Hebrew University Libraries Authority later this year.

During the 70's the position of Director was filled by a number of worthy incumbents. Prof. Malachi Bet Arie was appointed in 1979 and remained in the post until 1990. Two very important collections were opened to the public – the Eran Laor Collection of Ancient Maps, and the Sidney Edelstein History of Science Collection, each with their own reading room. The Library also received the Mehlmann collection of rare books in 1975. The next decade, which saw not only the opening of the new campus on Mount Scopus but the introduction of the ALEPH computer system used initially for circulation and cataloguing only. A short-lived attempt was made at first to create a joint catalogue between the JNUL and the Mount Scopus Bloomfield Library, but this was soon abandoned to the relief of both parties. The decision was made to catalogue all current acquisitions from 1983 onwards, but systematic retroactive conversion was out of the question and remained so for many years.

In 1982, the Albert Einstein Archives, as well as his personal library, found its home in the JNUL, and in 1987 the JNUL received the archives of Gershom Scholem as well as his library of books on kabbala and Jewish mysticism. After the fall of the Iron Curtain the Reprographic Unit was able to microfilm the Baron Guenzberg Collection in the Russian State Library in Moscow, as well as Jewish periodical literature in Rumania and Hungary.

As we come up to the present day, I would like to present a brief over view of the Library's collections and services. The Library is open to the public and anyone may freely use the Reading Rooms, except for the Scholem Room, which together with the Berlin Reading Room is used for rare books, so special

permission for entry must be given. Many of the books can be borrowed, and all Israeli citizens can take out a library card, but the first 2 copies of all Israeli publications (those received via Legal Deposit), and of all books defined as Judaica may not be taken out of the Library, but ordered to the Reading Rooms. International and Interlibrary Loan services are all available .

Collection development policy may be summarized as follows:

1. The national collection:

Identification of these materials is the primary aim, rather than selection, and these publications take precedence over all others. Legal deposit covers all Israeli publications in all formats, including hand held digital. In addition, no effort is spared to find and acquire foreign publications about every aspect of Israel, and the Jewish people. Literary and philosophical works by Jews, even if they do not appear to have Jewish content, and in general all materials reflecting the culture and history of the Jewish people are sought out.

2. The non-national collections:

Here strictly defined selection criteria are used, in other non-Judaica fields - particularly Islamic and Middle Eastern studies and European culture and history. Rules regarding numbers of copies, the language of the publication (English is first preference), its academic level, its accessibility in other libraries, govern the decision whether to buy or not. As the main research library of the Hebrew University in the Humanities it must strive to use its miniscule budget to the maximum effect to maintain the quality and relevance of its collection. In the States or in Britain where the national language is English much of the material received via Legal Deposit will answer research needs. This is not the case for Israel.

Stringent selection criteria are used for determining which free access electronic publications and websites should be included in the main catalogue. This is partly because of the difficulty in keeping track of such sites. Cataloging standards are those supplied by MARC format and AACR2, with additional metadata fields.

The number of volumes is some 5 million today, chiefly in closed stacks. Storage space is a major problem, and exacerbated by the fact that in the year 2000 the Legal Deposit Law was finally expanded to include all audio-visual and static electronic materials. The rising costs of periodicals and databases make it difficult to purchase monographs in certain fields. As a member of Malmad the Israeli Universities Consortium, it can provide its readers with access to thousands of electronic journals and databases, in some cases making it possible to terminate subscriptions of printed editions. We have yet to solve the problems arising from the archiving and preservation of digital materials. Still, the JNUL sees the capturing of Israeli born digital publications and websites as part of its mandate, even though these are not covered by law.

The conversion of the Hebrew character card catalogue was completed in 2001. Work on the Cyrillic and Arabic character catalogues is still underway. All these were done in-house. The Latin character catalogue posed a much greater problem due to its size. It was decided to give priority to Judaica subjects - and an estimated 130,000 main cards had to be pulled. Using the OCLC Retrocon Batch method, that is a system of automatic matching, without human intervention, we were able to download in two years over 70,000 records. The rest are being keyed in in-house, but lack of funds prevent us from dealing with the general catalogue - some 500,000 cards. The planned adoption of the web-based Aleph-500, with the Z39.50 protocol will affect current cataloging work processes, for example by providing the means for easy importing of cataloging records from other databases.

The JNUL's digitization Project funded by the David and Fela Shapell Family Foundation is really the Library's flagship for enabling free public access to some of the Library's important holdings, and also for gathering under one virtual roof treasures of the Jewish world not owned by the Library. The first to be launched was the Ketubbot Collection, 1200 of them belonging to the JNUL and new collections are being added all the time. They are all catalogued in English and Hebrew, and can be accessed by names, dates and places. The online treasury of Talmudic manuscripts brings together manuscripts held only by other institutions, such as the British Library and the Vatican, and negotiations are ongoing for further additions – such as the Leiden Talmud Yerushalmi. This year the Ancient Maps of Jerusalem site, based on the Laor Collection, was launched. Maps can be searched by date and by cartographer, using MrSid technology to navigate within each map. At present work continues on historic maps of the Land of Israel. The Albert Einstein Archives site presents selected papers, but now a new site in cooperation with the Einstein Papers project at California Institute of Technology combines the two databases and thousands of manuscripts and documents have been digitized.

Finally, the National Sound Archives has made a great effort to digitize hundreds of hours of physically endangered recordings, and selections are available from the JNUL site. In the pipeline are the Pinkase Kehillot and the large format historic Hebrew newspapers – about more of which you will hear shortly from Professor Adler.

THE COLLECTIONS

Time is very short and I will have to limit my description of the collections to displaying a selection of some of their particular treasures. I will just briefly mention a few facts about the following, while you view the slides:

Manuscript and Archives Department:

The collection includes nearly 12,000 bound manuscripts, 9,000 of them in Hebrew and about 2,000 in Arabic and other Oriental languages, another 500 in European languages. It should be borne in mind that the most important Hebrew manuscripts had already been collected by the such libraries as the Vatican and the Bodelian long before the JNUL's inception. Still every effort was made to build up the collection – Chasanowich's shipment contained some, and others donated as time went on. Already mentioned is the Yahuda bequest – 250 Hebrew and 1500 Arabic manuscripts – and thousands of handwritten pages by Isaac Newton – mystical rather than mathematical.

The most precious manuscripts include the Damascus "Keter", a Bible written in Burgos, Spain in 1260, a tenth-century Pentateuch, written in Palestine, two sederim from the Perush ha-Mishna of Maimonides, written in his own hand, and the Worms Mahzor from 1272.

The Abraham Schwadron collection of over 12,000 autographs and 700 portraits gathered over a period of 60 years was presented in 1926 (but continuously augmented). Letters, personal documents by, for example, the Vilna Gaon, Shneur Zalman of Lyady, Bialik, Heine, Kafka, Shalom Aleichem, Weizmann, Disraeli, Freud, Mahler and many others.

In addition the Library possesses hundred of personal archives of some of the by the greatest luminaries in our history – such as Agnon, Buber, Scholem, Walter Benjamin, Ahad ha-am, Leopold Zunz, Else Lasker-Schuler, Stefan Zweig and many others. Last year the archives of the writer S. Yizhar and the artist Avigdor Arrikha were added.

Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts

Established on the initiative of David Ben-Gurion in 1950 and transferred to the JNUL in 1963, the Institute aims to microfilm all known Hebrew manuscripts and fragments kept in libraries and private collections throughout the world, providing access to them in addition to the holdings of the JNUL, all in one place. Our digitization projects essentially continue this aim – to gather together the Jewish historical legacy in Jerusalem. Today some 95% of all known Hebrew manuscripts, including about 200,000 fragments are available on film. In recent years the filming of Hebrew manuscripts in the former Soviet Union has filled a major gap.

Music Department and National Sound Archives

The Department, founded in the 1930s, is based on a number of important collections of printed material and manuscripts, scores and recordings of music in general and Jewish music in particular, including contemporary Israeli folk and popular music. To mention the most important collections- those of Serge Koussevitsky, Jacob Michael, Abram Zvi Idelson, Paul Ben Haim, also the archives of cantors such as Solomon Pinkasowitch, Pinkas Minowski, Isaac Offenbach (father of Jacques). More recently the department received the personal archive of Israeli composer Alexander Uriya Boscovitch and the Hebrew and Yiddish song collection of Meir Noy, containing about 50,000 songs.

The National Sound Archives aims to collect, record (it has its own studio) and document the vocal heritage of various communities, Jewish and non-Jewish in Israel. Over 7,000 hours of recorded music are being digitized, both to ensure the preservation of endangered materials and to provide access to researchers wherever they may be. Some of these are available from the library's site:

<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/music/>

Incunabula and rare books

The Library owns some 174 Hebrew incunabula, representing 92 out of the known 140 editions of Hebrew books printed in this period. Some 40 of them are on parchment.

More information about all the collections can of course be found on the JNUL site: www.jnul.huji.ac.il

THE FUTURE

I would now like to end this story on a note of expectation, that is a combination of high hopes and uncertainty. A dramatic decision is about to be taken – to separate the JNUL from the Hebrew University's administrative structure. At the initiative of Yad Hanadiv, plans are being laid to re-create the Library as an independent public body, still retaining its close academic ties with the Hebrew University, but with the ability to act independently and thus to fulfill its original mission to be a National Library for all the citizens of the State of Israel as well as for the Jewish people wherever they may be. If the plan is accepted, Yad Hanadiv will provide a second building and revamp and modernize the existing one. Whether this comes to pass or not, our traditional aims, as listed below, are likely to remain basically unchanged:

Pursuing traditional goals in the new environment

- **to serve as the National Library for all citizens of the State of Israel as well as for the Jewish people in the Diaspora**
- **to serve as Israel's leading repository for academic research in the humanities**

If those goals are to be successfully attained, the short-term and long-term challenges are immense, and may be summed up in two distinct groups:

1. Attracting a wider public:

- **Providing access to the collections using digitization technology**
- **Greater involvement in Israel's cultural scene – lectures, exhibits, concerts; participating in national and municipal events**
- **Cooperation with the public and school library system**

2. Looking beyond the Library's walls:

- **Promote development of national information policy, involving such issues as government support and resource sharing for digital infrastructure and preservation, protection of national heritage, copyright issues, etc.**
- **Take professional initiatives, such as: establishing Hebrew Names authority database; contributing to lifelong education of Israel's library community.**
- **Look for ways to cooperate with other institutions: eg. Microfilm projects with Harvard Judaica Library.**
- **Establish relationship with Israel's publishing industry; introduction of CIP data**

Much of the above is not unique to Israel and we hope to learn from the experience of other national libraries. But in the short term there are specific tasks which must be addressed:

On the agenda now:

- 1. Transform Kiryat Sefer from printed format to online database accessible from the JNUL site**
- 2. Prepare for ALEPH-500**
- 3. Complete retrospective conversion of European language catalog**
- 4. Develop a strategy for building a properly organized hybrid collection**

By remaining in its present status, the JNUL's prospects of success in meeting these challenges are distinctly dim, perhaps impossible. The future, whether it augurs innovation and development - or stagnation, is really hanging in the balance.

Today's technology offers countless options for new interpretation and direction, but that original vision, expressed all those years ago by Yoshua Heshel Lewin, Josef Chasanowich and others, still endures brightly, reminding us that there is still so much to be done.

This paper was accompanied by a slide presentation displaying photographs and documents from the JNUL' archive.

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