

**PRESENTATION OF AJL LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARD
TO
ZACHARY BAKER**

By: Dr. David J. Gilner

Michael Grunberger, Head of the Hebraic Section at the Library of Congress, was originally scheduled to present this award to Zachary Baker. Unfortunately for him, a slight medical situation prevented Michael from being here today; we wish him a speedy and complete recovery. And unfortunately for you, you don't get to hear his presentation.

Our esteemed colleague and friend Zachary Baker is being honored here today with the Association of Jewish Libraries Life Membership Award. This award is granted in recognition of outstanding leadership and professional contributions to our Association and to the profession of Judaica librarianship. Fewer than a dozen individuals have been honored with this award, the most prestigious award granted by our Association.

Zachary graduated from the University of Chicago with an A.B. in U.S. History, Phi Beta Kappa. He was the Irving & Rose Crown Fellow at Brandeis while earning his M.A. in Library Science from the University of Minnesota & was elected to Beta Phi Mu. Just one academic high to another!

In 1976, Zachary joined both the staff at YIVO and the Association of Jewish Libraries. He served as Assistant, then Associate Librarian & as Chief Yiddish Cataloguer until 1981, when he began a six year stint as Head of Technical Services of the Jewish Public Library, Montreal. In 1987, Zachary returned to YIVO as Head Librarian, a post he held for the next 12 years. That year, he was elected Vice President of AJL's Research and Special Libraries Division. He went on to serve as R & S President, and in 1992, was elected Vice President/President-Elect of the entire Association. In 1994, Zachary became our President. In addition to undertaking his various official responsibilities for our Association during his times in office, Zachary worked hard in planning our 1986, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, and 1996 Annual Conventions.

When Zachary finished his term as Immediate Past President – having served for ten years consecutively on our Executive Board – he was immediately tapped to serve a four-year term as President of the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. He also made a transcontinental move to become Reinhard Family Curator of Judaica & Hebraica Collections at the Stanford University Libraries.

Zachary has been a bibliographic mainstay of the Jewish Book Annual, and a regular contributor to many scholarly journals, especially in history, bibliography, genealogy, and Yiddish. And Zachary has and will sweat bullets over *Judaica Librarianship*—‘nuff said. Special mention must be made of Zachary’s contributions to the field of Yiddish. It has been the hallmark of his professional career. Thanks to Zachary, when we look up the names of places in Eastern Europe, we stand an excellent chance of actually finding where we want to go. At present he has two important articles pending publication, on Yiddish publishing and a bibliography of Yiddish plays . And I would say more of his contribution to Yiddish – except that both Michael and I are constrained from saying anything more about Yiddish since we graduated from the Yeshiva of Flatbush while Joel Braverman was still the boss.

Planning our Annual Conventions was just not enough. Zachary presented papers in 1984, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2002, and 2003. Zachary, it’s not that you’ve presented enough, it’s that your colleagues have decided that it is time to make it more of a two-way street, and in gratitude and esteem for all you have done, they have voted to present you with something – Life Membership in our Association. Mazal Tov.