

### **Session 3B: AJL and the Social Web**

Heidi Estrin and Diane Romm

In this two-part presentation, we'll offer a virtual tour of AJL's Online presence (including the AJL website, blog, podcast, and Facebook page as well as AJL's Jewish ValuesFinder database). Then we'll move beyond AJL to explore other Jewish literary websites, blogs and podcasts. Our emphasis will be on "social media" and how we can interact with these online resources rather than being passive consumers of content.

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The words "social media" might sound intimidating, but I'm here to tell you that you already have a life online whether you realize it or not. You engage in social media whenever you interact with someone or something via the Internet. Raise your hand if you use... (go thru list) So you can see that we're not actually asking you to venture into completely unknown territory here. I just wanted to defuse some of the anxiety by pointing this out.

We're going to start by looking at some of the ways AJL itself uses social media, and then we'll talk about some other Jewish book-related social media you should be aware of. At the end, we'll talk about how you can interact with these websites beyond just reading them.

Diane has already shown you AJL's website and wiki, plus the Jewish Valuesfinder site. Now I want to show you the AJL Blog.

Before we get started, I do have to point out that AJL is in the process of hiring a professional team to redesign our website (which may include a redesign of our social media sites too), so don't worry too much about the exact layout of what you'll see. The heart will remain the same, but it may be getting a facelift!

#### **BLOG**

What's a blog? (audience define)

The AJL blog is called People of the Books and you can find it at URL.

Here's an example of what the blog looks like.

Content – why you should be interested:

- The blog includes AJL news, short-term events like the Convention Countdown or the STBA Blog Tour, and frequently participates in memes which are themed posts run simultaneously by lots of bloggers (like Non-Fiction Monday).

Technical details:

- The most recent posts are at the top and it goes backwards chronologically as you scroll down.
- Sidebar: Pages, Categories, Archives
- Subscribe to receive blog by email

THE POINT OF THE BLOG: to keep members and friends up to date on AJL news, to offer interesting extras of interest to Jewish book lovers, to share AJL's expertise in and passion for Jewish libraries and literature, to market AJL to the wider world

## PODCAST

A podcast is basically a radio show that you listen to online. The only real difference between a podcast and a plain old audio clip is that a podcast is an ongoing series rather than a oneshot.

The AJL Podcast is made up of recordings of sessions from convention and from some other AJL regional events (including a few in Hebrew recorded in Israel). We've been recording podcast audio at the last 2 conventions and we're doing it again this year. Thus the podcast becomes an audio archive of a convention, plus a really valuable resource for those who couldn't attend the convention, those who were at convention but missed a session they wanted to hear, or non-members who share our interests. It's also a great showcase for the excellent work AJL does.

Let's look at the website of the AJL podcast at URL.

You can see that it starts with an explanation of the contents, then explains how to subscribe either through iTunes or by email. I'll show you how that works in a few minutes.

Next it explains how to find the recordings you want, either by clicking a broad category or by using the index. Here's what the index looks like. Clicking any category or any subject in the index will bring up all the episodes with that label.

Or if you want to be thorough, you can browse through the complete list of all audio recordings (alphabetical by presenters' last name).

When you click on the title of an individual episode, you'll see this (example). You get a brief description, sometimes with links, and you get an audio player. Click the play button to listen on your computer. (play audio clip)

If you'd like to be notified by email when new episodes are posted, you can subscribe with this form.

THE POINT OF THE PODCAST: To archive audio of AJL events, to offer an educational resource to members and friends, to share AJL's expertise in and passion for Jewish libraries and literature, to market AJL to the wider world

## FACEBOOK

How many of you are familiar with Facebook? How many of you have seen AJL's Facebook page?

For those of you who haven't tried it, Facebook is basically a big virtual coffee klatch. It's conversation with friends, colleagues, and organizations that you're interested in like AJL. It ranges from water cooler chatter to intense discussions, just like any gathering of friends. It may seem like a time waster, but I like to point out that what holds people together is the social glue of "hey, how are you, what did you do last weekend, have you read any good books lately?" OK, that's my little plug for Facebook. In this context, the other thing I have to say is that Facebook is a good marketing tool for AJL. (Because that's where the people are, and businesses have to go where people will see them.)

If you're not a Facebook user you can still view the AJL Facebook page at URL, but you won't be able to post comments. If you ARE a Facebook user, please LIKE the AJL page by clicking this button here. As you know, once you do that, posts made by AJL (like these here) will show up on YOUR Facebook wall along with posts from all your friends. If you're already using Facebook, this is a very convenient way to stay informed about AJL.

What kind of stuff does AJL post? Some of it is the same exact content you'll find on the AJL Blog (point out posts). Some of it is links to relevant sites like this link to the Jewish Valuesfinder, or links we've posted to news like the Canadian Jewish Book Awards, Jewish author interviews, and so on.

We have also taken advantage of Facebook's use as a place to share photos, to put up pictures from conventions and so on.

A nice thing about Facebook is that it's very interactive. For instance, users can express their approval for AJL news as in this example (Linda Silver's book, several people Like), or you can actually get a bit of conversation going as in this example posted by a fan on AJL's Facebook page.

If you ARE on Facebook, I invite you to post comments or photos of your own to AJL's Facebook page, or to include @association of jewish libraries in your post so it will show up on our page.

Just a quick plug to those of you who are Facebook users – along with becoming fans of AJL's page, I'd also like to invite you to fan the Valuesfinder page and The Book of Life page!

THE POINT OF AJL ON FACEBOOK: to increase AJL's visibility, to make it convenient for people to interact with AJL, to share AJL news and to market AJL to the wider world

## TWITTER

OK, so no one person can keep up with everything, right? And now we come to my weak spot, and it's Twitter.

Twitter, as you've probably heard, is a forum where people can post very very short messages (140 characters). Like Facebook, it's a social network where you can stay in touch with other

people so they read your messages and you read theirs. Unlike Facebook, I find it less intuitive to use and more confusing. It's meant to be used pretty much on a daily basis and if you don't keep up with it, it's difficult.

Our AJL Consultant, Marie Cloutier, is very Twitter savvy and has been posting on behalf of AJL. Material from the AJL Blog and Facebook page are included. Marie also has conversations via Twitter with many people in the publishing world, effectively putting AJL on their radar screens. She tells me that she sees Twitter as a professional tool for outreach to the book trade and in her opinion it's not something that we as individual librarians need to worry about too much. However, I know that some people use Twitter to interact with friends and family in the way that I use Facebook. Is there anyone here who's an active Twitter user who would like to talk about the advantages of using Twitter?

THE POINT OF AJL ON TWITTER: to increase AJL's visibility, to make it convenient for people to interact with AJL, to share AJL news and to market AJL to the wider world especially the book trade

There are plenty of Jewish book-related sites out there beyond AJL, and I want you should know about them. I'm going to give you a brief overview of a few favorites. It's not a comprehensive list, and feel free to add your own suggestions.

Forwardsbooks blog  
Barbara Bietz's Blog  
Tablet and Vox Tablet  
The Jewish Book Council Blog  
The Whole Megillah  
The JPS Blog

I also think it's important to NOT just talk amongst ourselves. We need to bring conversations about Jewish books to others who might not realize what great stuff they're missing. So I invite you to pay attention to both Jewish AND non-Jewish book sites too, so that you can add your own Jewish 2 cents to those conversations as well.

## INTERACTION

OK, if you listened to the Why Be Social series on The Book of Life, you'll know that I believe strongly that we need to be ACTIVE users of social media, not just passive consumers. In fact, I will go so far as to say that social media is Good for the Jews. Before I explain myself, is there anyone out there who thinks that too, and if so, why?

So here's why I think it's Good for the Jews. I think it's good in two ways, internal and external.

Internally, I think using these sites is good because it keeps us as librarians in the loop with professional information about new books, about events, about issues in the field, and so on. It's a professional development tool and it makes us look smart, just like reading Hasafran.

Externally, I think these sites

- Popularize Jewish books, helping them find more readers/buyers, helping them stay in print
- Help build the audience for Jewish lit among Jewish and non-Jewish readers
- Drum up business and support for Jewish libraries by creating a demand for the titles and creating a book-celebratory atmosphere
- Help Jewish lit reach beyond niche audiences, building bridges with other communities

What YOU can do to promote Jewish books using social media:

- If you use Facebook or Twitter or any other social network, share info about Jewish books, libraries, events, etc in those forums
- Visit existing Jewish book blogs and show your support and engagement by posting comments
- Visit secular book blogs and share your two cents about Jewish issues when appropriate to the conversations happening on those sites by posting comments
- Support Judaica authors by sending them fan letters by email, fanning them on Facebook, posting comments on their blog if they have one
- Post reviews or comments on Amazon, GoodReads, or other sites that accept user reviews
- Add information to AJL's wiki but also to other wikis including Wikipedia (about AJL, about your library, individual books, any library issues, etc)

**CONCLUSION:**

**SHARE.** Share your knowledge, expertise, opinions, questions.

You can do with with colleagues and patrons at home, you can do it at AJL conventions, but the Internet gives us the opportunity to go so much further and share with so many more people. As members of a minority, it behooves us to make sure our voices are heard in the world. The internet and social media make that easy