

Planning to Automate your School, Synagogue, or Center Library?

Barbara Y. Leff

Description: This session will help organize your thoughts and guide you in the right direction as you make plans to automate your Judaica library. We will talk about how to: (1) determine your library needs, (2) develop a technology plan, and (3) evaluate library software. You'll get lots of helpful handouts.

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Good morning everyone. I'm delighted to see you — I'm sure you are here because you are just as confused as I was about 10-12 years ago. Automating your library is scary. It appears overwhelming! I suggest you look at automation as a puzzle and a challenge — and say to yourself, OK, let's find all the parts and put it all together because I'm going to create something really wonderful.

Let me give you a little bit of my background so you will know that I can empathize with many of you. When I became Library Director of Stephen S. Wise Temple in Los Angeles in 1969, we had 500 books on open shelves and I was not a librarian, had no library experience. I knew nothing about what I was doing — but I did love books and Judaism. My synagogue sent me to weekly classes for eight years — the subject was Judaica librarianship, sponsored by the College of Jewish Studies–Jewish Institute of Religion (precursor to Hebrew Union College-JIR). I became inspired and eventually went to graduate school and earned my MLS in 1979. When I retired in 1996, we had about 35,000 items in our collection, the equivalent of 10 full-time library staff, a media production lab, 14 computers, and Internet access — all serving what became one of the largest synagogues/day schools in the country.

I firmly believe that my attitude helped our library's growth and development and the full support from Rabbi Zeldin and the powers-that-be at our institution. I learned a very positive attitude early on — in my second Judaica librarianship class in 1970. Dorothy Schroeder, z"l, our beloved instructor, said to us

— remember YOU ARE THE EXPERTS. I laughed out loud and said — I know nothing, how can I stand up to my supervisors and say I am an expert? Dorothy replied — Barbara, do you think your educational director or rabbi know what you learned in our class last week? I answered — probably not. Dorothy said — then YOU ARE THE EXPERT — what little you know is more than they know on that topic and don't you forget it!

So, I say to you — you may not know much right now — but in certain areas, you know more than others. So, keep your chin high and assume the pose of an expert while you learn the right

questions to ask. One hour from now, you will know more on this topic than probably most of the folks in your institution. Sure, you have lots more to learn — but don't let anyone intimidate you. When you feel confidence in yourself, you'll find learning will be a lot easier, and the challenge of automation will be fun!

I'm here because, from 1997-1999, I wrote a series of four articles on library automation and one on retrospective conversion for *AJL Newsletter*. I had hoped to revise and publish them on the AJL website — but with technology changing exponentially daily, and now being retired, keeping current is difficult. But, better times are here. In 1997, I found only 3 books and a few websites on automation. Today there are many books (I display them here and list them in my Bibliography — APPENDIX F) and many websites (APPENDIX G). Automating a library is not a Judaica topic, but AJL knows this is a concern and a problem for many. This session was scheduled as an introduction — and these other resources should be able to serve your needs too. I'll also set up email communication among us all after convention so we can keep in touch, and I'll keep you as current as I am able.

Now, to begin. First, do not think of your library as one isolated small library somewhere in a city. You are not alone. You are part of a greater library community — a global community reflecting the global world today. In regional consortia consisting of small and large libraries (including academic and public), they have found that each library contributes to the mix, and each benefits from the other, and the consortia is better and stronger because of everyone's participation, including small libraries. You are building a library for the future — probably networking with others and contributing to individual and world knowledge. That is why computerization and standards are important, not just for your library's benefit now — but also for the future.

Next, think about the process of automation. For centuries, libraries have been creating card catalogs via a manual process — but with computers, you input only one record and automatically have many access points for many purposes, there is no filing of cards, searching is far superior because we can access a single word or part of a word within a title or author, and many can use the catalog simultaneously for different kinds of services. In short, your library services will be substantially improved. Add to it finding additional information sources on the Internet without requiring more library square footage, and you can see why automation is a necessity in today's library world. Of course, a library is also an office and can benefit greatly from a computer just as any office.

Definitions

Hardware — computer equipment and peripherals, e.g., printers, modems, backup devices, power surge protectors, network equipment, CD-ROM and DVD drives.

Software — the programs that direct the computer and peripherals to do what you want.

Integrated Online Library System (IOLS) or Integrated Library System (ILS). IOLS is software tailored specifically for libraries, which allows the record of an item to be entered only once into the computer, and then that record is integrated and used for acquisitions, cataloging,

circulation, search and retrieval, inventory, bibliographies, etc. IOLS complies with cataloging standards (e.g., MARC, Z39.50 Internet/Web compatibility).

Standards:

- **MARC format** — the standard for the representation and communication of bibliographic and related information in machine-readable form. Libraries must adhere to standards in order to network with other libraries, for copy cataloging (copying cataloging data from another library catalog online), etc. IOLS software automatically formats your data input to MARC. Library of Congress publishes *MARC 21 Format for Bibliographic Data*. [See *Understanding MARC Bibliographic: Machine-Readable Cataloging* – <http://www.loc.gov/marc/umb>]
- **Z39.50** — an international standard that allows a user in one computer system to search and retrieve information from other computer systems. [See Library of Congress “About the Z39.50 Gateway” —<http://lcweb.loc.gov/z3950/gateway.html#about>]

Automation of a Library Catalog — the process of providing computerized access to your library collection by creating and maintaining a record of library holdings on a computer software program instead of a manually printed card catalog. The software allows for machine-readable records to be manipulated in many ways in order to access various kinds of data. The resulting catalog is often referred to as a “*computerized catalog*,” or an “*automated catalog*,” and may be maintained on a single computer.

Online Catalog — When a computerized catalog is available on more than one computer, i.e. a computer network, then it is referred to as an “*online catalog*.”

Web Catalog — When a computerized or online catalog has been published on the World Wide Web (Web) of the Internet, it is referred to as a “*Web catalog*,” “*Web-based catalog*,” or “*published on the Web*.”

Retrospective Conversion — the process of converting an existing manual card catalog into a computerized catalog. This is commonly known as “*recon*” or “*retrocon*” and is part of the library automation process.

Library Technology Plan

A Plan is crucial for success; it helps put the tasks in perspective so they will not appear overwhelming. Those new to automation often become frustrated because they want easy answers, products, and services, without realizing that each library and institution is unique and the large variety of products and services make it a complex process. Everyone must do some HOMEWORK; it is the only way to learn the right questions to ask. Only by getting answers to the right questions, can you find the “best” for your library.

A Plan accomplishes the following:

- organizes the process and saves time, money, and frustration; without a plan, you may choose the wrong software, hardware, procedure, and waste time and money.
- recognizes that bringing a computer into the library is not a one-time stand-alone project, but considers the needs of your institution as well.

- enlists the aid of a committee, whose members may become not only new patrons but also strong library advocates — because they know that you care about meeting their needs.
- proves to decision-makers that you know what you are doing, that they can trust you to spend money wisely, and that you are thinking beyond the here and now.

If your institution/school already has a technology plan, then incorporate the library's needs into that plan. If no technology plan exists and none are in the making, then write your own. To develop a plan, invite a representative from each of the following to serve on a Library Technology Plan Committee: Teachers, administrators, students, parents, synagogue/school boards, technology experts, etc. Draft an outline of a Plan and meet regularly to refine it. Keep your supervisor apprised of progress, ask advice as needed, and plan no surprises. In this way, you will usually get full administrative approval and support.

Be consistent in following the Plan. Give each step a lot of thought BEFORE you take action. Expect to problem-solve as you progress. Mistakes happen but don't agonize over them if they do. There is lots of advice available, and sample plans, via local colleagues in private and public libraries, through AJL's *Hasafran* (an electronic newsletter), at library and technology conferences, and on the Internet.

I've written this **Library Technology Plan** to use as a guide. We will only have time to discuss the first 5 steps today. I'll cite some helpful sources for the second 5 steps at the end of this presentation.

1. Gather **information about technology**, especially hardware and software.
2. Identify **software and hardware** — in your library and institution, and in neighboring libraries.
3. Review **mission statements** of your institution and library, and **set goals, objectives, and priorities** on how technology might help achieve these visions.
4. Conduct a **needs assessment** of library, its users and potential users; consider both facts and perceptions.
5. Evaluate and select **software and hardware** — for general library tasks (e.g. word processing), and for specific library-related tasks (e.g. online library systems for cataloging, circulation, Web access.)
6. Evaluate and select **library automation method**; including **retrospective conversion** when applicable.
7. Determine **personnel needed**, including (perhaps) a consultant
8. Create a **budget**; consider other **funding sources**; develop a **timeline**.
9. Arrange for **implementation and installation**.
10. Plan for **orientation and training** of patrons and staff, and adhere to schedule.
11. Develop **evaluation and maintenance** plans, and budget accordingly.

1. Information about Technology

This step introduces you to technology. There are two kinds of software — those that are used for general office procedures in your library, and those specifically for library tasks, such as

automating your catalog. Hardware, i.e. computer equipment and peripherals, come in two choices: PC's (IBM, IBM-compatibles) and Apple Macintosh.

Information about software for office-type procedures probably can be learned from your institution's administrator or secretary. I suggest you computerize your general library tasks first to help your staff and volunteers become comfortable with computers, for example: Writing donor letters with a word processor, preparing a budget with a spreadsheet, making signs and decorating your library with a graphics program, and making helpful lists and directories with a database management program. I have prepared a list of library tasks that you can do both manually and via computer; the computer is more efficient and cost-effective. (See APPENDIX A — A Walk Through the Library via the Eyes of a Computer.) Your supervisors will be more willing to invest in a library computer if they know that it will be used daily for many tasks, not just for a computerized catalog.

Library automation software is designed for larger libraries and smaller libraries; the difference is size of collection, functions, complexity, price, etc. Software for smaller libraries range generally from approximately \$1000 to \$10,000 or \$20,000; larger libraries range from \$50,000 to six figures. Most automation software follow the IOLS model (see Definitions above) and are packaged in individual modules (e.g. cataloging, circulation), which can be bought separately and phased in, or as a single product handling all functions. To produce catalog cards, there are inexpensive stand-alone software packages, which I do NOT recommend unless it follows MARC format and the data can be converted to an IOLS as the library grows; if not, all data will be lost and will have to be re-entered in the future. I do NOT recommend homemade systems — created by someone who can write a computer program (without the MARC standard); that software is only good for as long as that person is around to handle maintenance and upgrades. Do not saddle yourself or your successor with future problems of having to start from scratch! On the other hand, there is a viable, inexpensive option — LibraryCom — a Web-based application service that provides the software — see Step 5 for information and APPENDIX E for a user's description of her experience.

Regarding automation software *for smaller libraries*, gather as much information as you can from books, journals, and the Internet. Go to the Exhibits here at AJL Convention and other library conventions (exhibit passes are free or minimal cost) and you'll gain a wealth of information. Check the Internet (a search for "library automation" on <http://www.google.com> will give you names of lots of software companies). Contact these companies for literature, demo disks. Remember, you are not making a decision — you are gathering information.

To help narrow the software product search, Susan Dubin, an AJL member and a former Jewish day school library educator, now a consultant (Off the Shelf Library Services), offered to prepare a list for me to share with you. It is a descriptive (not evaluative) "List of Selected Library Management Software for Small Libraries" (APPENDIX B).

About hardware: See Step 2 below regarding the influence of on-site hardware on your decision. In the gather information stage, learn about the computer, its capabilities and peripherals. Pay attention to specifics of RAM memory, storage, speed, modems — their limitations and expansion possibilities — because as library computers are connected with the Internet, these are cru-

cial features. If you're not familiar with computers and have no in-house technical support, I recommend you buy locally from someone who can help you install, trouble-shoot, and update your hardware, even if you have to pay more than mail order. A good source for hardware information is C|Net for descriptions, reviews, price comparisons, etc. — <http://www.cnet.com/>

When working with vendors, feel free to tell them that you're just learning. Vendors are happy to teach you. As you interview more vendors, your knowledge will grow, you'll see product differences, and you'll learn to ask the right questions. For example, one question is — what is the recommended size of the computer hard drive and RAM memory for that software? The answer will probably be minimum and maximum figures and if you already have hardware that meets the minimum requirements, you may be told that's OK. It is not! One of the biggest problems I've found is computers crashing (shutting down), and software gets blamed. Often it is not the software but rather inadequate hard drive and memory sizes that need to be expanded. ALWAYS start with the maximum recommended and expect to expand in the future. Remember, the very nature of libraries is that the collection grows, thus the size of the catalog will grow as well – and you'll need more storage and memory as time goes on.

Before you speak to vendors, think of where your library is and where you would like it to be. Be prepared with answers to these questions about your library, e.g.

- What kinds of materials do you have in your collection (books, audiovisual, electronic resources)?
- How large is your library collection (total number of items; total number of titles — Judaica adult, Judaica children's, secular, other languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, etc.); how many pre-1968 titles; numbers of records with unique numbers (ISBN, ISSN, LCCN). (You can approximate these figures.)
- What is your library's growth potential? Approximately how many new items do you purchase annually?
- Do you have a card catalog? Does one card contain full description, i.e., call no., title, subtitle, author, subject headings, inventory records, and a unique no. (e.g. ISBN, ISSN, LCCN)?
- What library standards do you plan to follow? (e.g. MARC, Z39.50)
- How many local fields do you need, e.g. Dewey and/or Elazar classification systems; curricular topics; special collections?
- Is your institution growing and, if so, how fast? What is its future potential?
- How many library patrons do you have and what is the potential for the future?
- What is the circulation level? Will it increase substantially? (yes, if day school in future)
- What is your staffing (paid and volunteer)? Computer literate? Will staffing be increased in the future?
- What can your institution/library afford for hardware, software, etc.? Will a phase-in plan be considered?
- What are your constraints, e.g. existing hardware, compatibility issues, funding, staffing?
- Will your library catalog be accessed by others off-site (teachers, students, institution members)?
- How do you plan to do your cataloging — buy from vendors, online copy cataloging, accessing FreeMARC.com or other such Web sites, original cataloging?

- What functions are most important to automate and in what priority? (Functions: Cataloging, circulation, periodicals, reference, search and retrieval, acquisitions, reserves, etc.)

[Culled from *Guide to Library Automation*, 3rd ed., Winnebago Software Co., modified with permission.]

2. Identify software and hardware

Now, go around your institution and community and identify what everyone else is using. Perhaps their choices will suit your needs, providing you with welcome technical support and sharing. But, remember, your needs are unique and in Step 5 you must choose what's best for your own library and institution.

- **Software:** For general business software, see what is on premises — the pros and cons. For library automation software, check with other smaller libraries in your area and ask for a demo. Think how your patrons might benefit from each software you view. Research takes time — reserve the privilege to return and view again.
- **Hardware:** If your institution has PCs but you love the Mac, investigate a PC for the library. You will save money and aggravation if your institution can provide general PC business software and PC technical support. If you love the Mac (my favorite) and the school has Macs and tech support, then the Mac is a viable option. Your computer can quickly outgrow minimum standards because, as you input more data and your software performs more functions when you upgrade, everything will slow down — access time, retrieval time, calculation time, and often the program will freeze or crash and you might lose whatever you were working on. Besides the computer, identify peripherals. *Do not consider saving money by accepting hardware cast-offs because older equipment may not provide needed support for the library software required now or software upgrades in the future.*

3. Mission Statements – Goals, Objectives, Priorities

Review mission statements of your institution and library; the library mission should support the institution. Now that you know a little about technology potential, set your library technology goals and objectives to carry out the missions. Consider your priorities. How can technology help achieve missions? Plan to revise as you learn more.

4. Needs Assessment

The best way to serve your institution is to know needs and potential needs. Here are some questions for the Library Technology Committee to discuss; you should be prepared to answer or explore these issues:

- What are the institution's present and future technology priorities?
- What are the library's present and future technology priorities?
- What library services and procedures can be improved by automation?
- How will automation increase library staff productivity, accuracy, and efficiency, thereby saving money and time?

- Does the library need to have access to all of its books and materials? Aren't books being replaced by the Internet? (See APPENDIX C — Books vs. Electronic Media for answers)

A Needs Assessment is an important step. Plan to interview formally or informally in order to define current and future needs, perceptions (right and wrong), and to help articulate those needs that exist but are often unknown. Set up appointments with your rabbis, cantors, educational director, principal, school advisers, administrators and administrative staff, teachers, parents, students, camp counselors, synagogue leaders, library staff/volunteers, etc. [Suggested by attendees of this session: Archivists, institution members, local authors, non-Jewish community people who use your library.] Don't guess or assume you know their needs — keep an open mind.

Now that you know a little about software capabilities, prepare a list of questions for your interviews: Discuss synagogue and school — programs and services, current and future, and “pie in the sky” ideas. Have them share specific class needs/curricula. Ask about their experiences in public libraries and schools, professional libraries. They may give you a fresh perspective. Walk them quickly through the steps of circulation, acquisitions, reference, retrieval, and program support to show how a computerized catalog might meet their needs. Ask if they have a need for special software features you've culled from the library automation software literature you've gathered. An added bonus is that whomever you interview will feel involved — which translates into strong support for you and the library. [If you'd like a list of interview questions, write to the author — byleff@socal.rr.com.]

Here are examples of how a Needs Assessment will affect the kind of library automation software you might buy: If your school wants you to include curricular topics or reading levels, then the software should allow specific fields, or extra fields, for these, not only for input but also for searching. If your school schedules library visits every 3 weeks or a month, the rabbis want the reference books to circulate for a day or two, and you want to make adjustments for holidays, your software should allow easily adjustable due dates. If your school wants thumbnail sketches of cataloged posters or Web resources accessible within your catalog, then your software should allow links to image files and storage/links to Web resources. If senior citizens use your library, then search and retrieval screens should display larger type sizes; and for young children you will want kid-friendly screens. And, if teachers/rabbis want to access the library catalog from home and also set up class reference or reserve materials for print, non-print, and electronic resources, then the software should allow you to publish your library catalog on the Internet and provide the functions you will need.

5. Evaluate and Select Software and Hardware

Now it's time to make a selection. It's best to decide on software first, and then hardware, because software has hardware requirements. Think of your mission, look at your needs in detail, and compare them to features and capabilities of the products you surveyed.

For office-type software, the decision should not be too difficult because most software products are very similar, especially if you're just using it for the basic features. Choose the one where you will have support close by — someone to teach you the more advanced features as you become more adept with the products.

For library automation software, I recommend an Integrated Online Library System. Refer to Susan Dubin's software list (APPENDIX B), among others. When you've narrowed your search to a few, give the vendor a list of software features that you need to be certain that the software you're considering can handle it. (For an extensive list of features, refer to APPENDIX D — Library Automation Software guidelines.) **NEVER** base your decision on the personality or promises of the vendor salesperson; it's the company and technical support that you'll be "living with" long after you've bought the product. Before you buy, get backup data directly from the company's literature or website, and call technical support with your questions. Check with others on Hasafran too. Keep this in mind: *No one library automation software will serve all of your needs — you will have to compromise, but try to compromise as little as possible.* When you decide on the one — visualize not only how the workflow will all come together into one satisfying experience but also how the end results of a seamless computerized catalog will affect your library. Imagine too how easy it will be to manage the software, call customer support, and get answers to your questions and problems in a timely manner.

Another option is NOT to buy software, but instead subscribe to LibraryCom — a web-based application and hosting service designed to automate a wide variety of personal, school, special, and public libraries. In other words, instead of your own software installed on your own computer, log on to the Internet and create your library catalog using their software on their server, adhering to library standards. LibraryCom, a division of CASPR Library Systems, can be used permanently (e.g. if your institution doesn't have enough server storage capacity for the library catalog), or temporarily (e.g. until you make a software decision). [As of July 1, 2002, LibraryCom offers a 60-day free trial period and several pricing plans, starting at \$150/year, based on collection size and customer service.] Check the details at <http://www.LibraryCom.com/> [Note: See APPENDIX E — Librarycom.com Overview by Cindy Gerecht. Cindy, while an attendee of this session, became motivated to create a library catalog on LibraryCom. She was so satisfied with the outcome that she wrote a report for a 2002 AJL Convention session, which she was unable to attend. Because Cindy's catalog was a direct result of this session and very relevant to those reading this, I have included it here.]

We haven't time to discuss budget and costs but this is often the bottom line when purchasing hardware and software. Once you do your research and discover the costs, you have a number of options: If you have the funds, purchase it all at once. If you don't, phase in while you do fund-raising. If it's the difference between getting what you need and making do, wait until you have the funds. Also, Librarycom is a good, inexpensive option. Remember, too, budget each year for maintenance and upgrades of both hardware and software.

Steps 6 – 11 of the Library Technology Plan

There is not enough time to cover the rest of this process. You can explore the books on my Bibliography List (APPENDIX F) and check out the Web Resources List (APPENDIX G). Also, I have written articles in the past detailing all 11 of the steps; these will soon be available on my website. I am in the process of constructing my own website on which to mount many of the articles I have written, and lists I've created, including the *AJL Newsletter* articles mentioned at the beginning of this paper. These will all be dated, so you will know you'll be looking at older

documents. However, as long as the described processes might still be helpful even several years later, I'll include them on my website.

Contact me at byleff@socal.rr.com with questions about this paper or for my website availability.

CONCLUSION: Final advice on automation: Explore options, keep an open mind, involve others, plan for flexibility, think toward the future, and feel comfortable in knowing that you tried your best. Good luck!

(Handouts follow)

APPENDIX A

A WALK THROUGH THE LIBRARY VIA THE EYES OF A COMPUTER

Barbara Y. Leff

[NOTE: This list is too long to include in the Proceedings. For the detailed 4-page list, please write to author – byleff@socal.rr.com.]

The purpose of this list is to show that computers have an important place in the library, that they can be used continually for all types of library operations and services, and that they are a worthwhile library investment. Most of these basic library tasks can be performed both manually and by a computer [but the computer is more efficient, cost-effective, and saves time and money, once the initial investment has been made.]....

This List covers:

Audio-Visual Equipment; Bibliographies, Booklists, and Other Lists of Materials/Resources; Budget; Cataloging; Catalogs; Circulation; Collection — Print, Media, and Electronic Resources; Communications; Decorations and Signs; Distance Learning (For Staff Development or Student Lessons); Donations and Other Income; Faculty In-Service; Graphics, Awards, Maps; Hebrew Language Capabilities; Inventory; Library Lessons; Library Orientation (For Teachers, Students, Patrons); Media (Audiovisual Materials — Videotapes, Audiotapes, CDs, Etc.); Periodicals / Journals; Personnel (Paid Staff, Volunteers, or Students); Planning Tools; Publicity and Newsletters; Reference Services; Search and Retrieve Information; Selection and Acquisitions; Space Planning; Statistics.

APPENDIX B

LIST OF SELECTED LIBRARY MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE FOR SMALL LIBRARIES

Compiled by
Susan Dubin, Off the Shelf Library Services
November, 2001

Susan Dubin prepared this 4-page List, with comparative descriptions and prices, special for this convention session — but limited space precludes publishing it here. Her main source for the data was: *Directory of Library Automation Software, Systems, and Services* — 2000-2001 Edition. Compiled and Edited by Pamela Cibbarelli. Medford, NJ: Information Today, 2000.

The software described on this list, with sources for information, are:

Aleph, Alexandria, Aristocat, Athena, CIRC/CAT for MAC OS (Winnebago), The Circulation Desk (Right on Programs), Concourse, Endnote, Galaxy, Glas, Heritage IV, Inmagic, Library 4 Universal, Library Pro, Librarysoft, Library Solution, Libraryworld, Lion, Mac the Librarian, Microcat, Softlink ALICE, SIRS Mandarin, Sapphire Enterprise, Spectrum 4, Summitone, Surpass, Voyager, Webrary (Internet OPAC), Winnebago Circ/Cat.

For a copy of this detailed List, write to Susan Dubin at sdubin@lausd.k12.ca.us

APPENDIX C — BOOKS VS. ELECTRONIC MEDIA

For a one-page summary of why we must continue to plan for print materials, write to: byleff@socal.rr.com

APPENDIX D — LIBRARY AUTOMATION SOFTWARE GUIDELINES

For four-page Guidelines covering: Library standards; Integrated Online Library System (IOLS); Automation Software; Comparison Shopping, write to: byleff@socal.rr.com

APPENDIX E

LIBRARYCOM.COM OVERVIEW

Cindy Gerecht

*Temple Emanuel Library, Kensington, MD — JUNE 2002**

The following report is intended as an overview of Librarycom.com, a web hosting and search service supported by CASPR, a respected library automation software vendor. However, I have been using this service for less than a year, and my synagogue library has been closed, due to renovation, for the entire time that I have been using it. With that being said, I do feel that I have a good sense of the pros and cons of the system and would be happy to share them with you here.

I first began to hear about Librarycom.com (see www.librarycom.com) shortly after the convention last year, at which I attended a very informative session regarding library automation given by Barbara Leff. The session was full, but Barbara left us with the definite feeling that we could contact her with any specific questions that we might have. When I heard about this service, an Application Service Provider or ASP, as Barbara explained, I was intrigued and she gave me the confidence and information that I needed to pursue the company itself with my endless questions before I embarked on this fairly new endeavor.

Librarycom.com is an integrated library system with MARC cataloging, circulation, patron management and report functions — the main difference being that this is provided over the Internet rather than housed on your computer. They have a freeMARC service, where you download MARC records, change them to meet the specification of your particular library (e.g. add your local call numbers and copy/bar code information) and build a catalog. Some old, rare or very new records are not available, but can be obtained through a Union Catalog or simply typed in yourself to meet your needs. The records are then stored in this new form into your library catalog on their computers, and are accessible to you only through their website. They provide three layers of back up to the system, and these records now belong to you, although they are storing them for you. In fact, they will send you copies of these records if you are nervous about your records simply disappearing into thin air one day. They can also convert existing records that you may have in another format to a Librarycom.com catalog.

The pluses to this system are that the data is in fact housed at their location and accessible to you, and all of your patrons, over the Internet. This allows your patrons to check for items that you may have from their home or office in most cases. It provides real time inventory control, and you have no need to purchase, or have hard drive space for, additional hardware or software. Libraries can also build a Union Catalog, to be used for cataloging purposes and/or for patron access. Eventually, CASPR would like to include serials control, interlibrary loan, and acquisitions modules, although they do not exist now. The other plus of the system is the cost, or lack thereof — the cost of using this system is actually free for the first 10 megabytes of data (about 5,000 records). However, for \$300 a year, you receive a great deal of additional storage as well as 800-number telephone support (otherwise, they provide e-mail support to anyone, even people who just wish to catalog their home libraries using this free system). The customer service that I have received over both the phone and computer has been excellent.

The negatives of this system are basically summed up in the fact that you are totally dependent on CASPR for maintaining this service, and thus your library catalog. I do not think that the company is going anywhere as they are a well-established library automation company, but this particular service is an experiment of sorts, and only time will tell if it gets the kind of support that it will need to keep going. It is, however, a relatively inexpensive thing for them to maintain and I have had many conversations with the technical support people there regarding this matter.

I would recommend this system to any small synagogue or other type of library that wants the power of library software, but may not need quite all the bells and whistles in terms of a multitude of report types, serials control, etc. that a more powerful program will provide. I would, however, recommend asking them to provide you with copies of your records at reasonable intervals. I had a situation where I had quite limited funds as well as limited hardware in my library, and this solution so far has been great for me, but I would also recommend it to others who may feel that an easy to use, Internet accessible system is what they are looking for. This system would be ideal for volunteers who may not be librarians, as with some explanation of MARC cataloging they could be on their way to creating a viable library system.

Feel free to look at my catalog by going to www.librarycom.com/opac and signing into library “tel” (for Temple Emanuel Library) as a guest. Remember that this is what the patron will see — other modules exist for cataloging, circulation, and reporting that are not shown here and are accessible for the librarian under password protection. I welcome any input and feel free to e-mail me at cgerecht@erols.com if you have looked at the Librarycom.com site and have questions — chances are that I may have already asked them myself and I would be happy to pass along any information I have.

[Note: This was not a handout at the session but rather written as a direct result of the session. Because the information is relevant and very informative, it is included here (as explained in Step 5 in the above text).]

APPENDIX F — LIBRARY AUTOMATION — SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

For a one page list of books and sources, write to: byleff@socal.rr.com

APPENDIX G

**WEB SOURCES FOR LIBRARY AUTOMATION — A BEGINNING LIST
and
WEB SOURCES FOR LIBRARY OPERATIONS & SERVICES, INCLUDING
AUTOMATION — A BEGINNING LIST**

For a one page list of Web sources, write to: byleff@socal.rr.com
