Accessing the Iraqi Jewish Archive
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Description: The Iraqi Jewish Archive, a group of 2,700 books and tens of thousands of documents found in Saddam Hussein's flooded intelligence building, came to the United States in 2003 for preservation, cataloging, and exhibition. The books and documents all relate to the Baghdadi Jewish Community. After nearly ten years, the material is now all available through an online database ensuring access. This paper will discuss the unique challenges of the collection, plus the exciting discoveries of materials from the basement.

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Introduction

The story of the Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation project begins in May 2003. Just days after coalition forces took control of Baghdad, a US Army team found thousands of Jewish religious books and communal documents under four feet of water in the flooded basement of Saddam Hussein's intelligence headquarters. With outside help, most of the water was pumped out of the basement and the books and documents were brought out to a nearby courtyard to dry. The materials were then packed into metal trunks. This team did the best they could in the situation they had before them. Unfortunately, in Baghdad's intense heat and humidity, the partially damp papers quickly became moldy. Seeking guidance, the Coalition Provisional Authority placed an urgent request for assistance to the National Archives and Records Administration. The Archives Preservation staff is known as specialists in dealing with wet and damaged materials. Their expertise was called upon during Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy to advise on dealing with preservation issues. NARA, the acronym for the Archives, sent Director of Preservation Programs Doris Hamburg and Conservation Chief Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler to Baghdad to assess the damage and make recommendations for preserving the books and documents. In the meantime, the Coalition Provisional Authority secured a freezer truck to stabilize the materials. Freezing is a common and highly effective method to stabilize wet and moldy paper. Freezing does not reverse mold or water damage, but it does prevent any more mold growth. It was in this freezer truck that Doris and Mary Lynn first examined the collection; much was frozen solid. Doris and Mary Lynn also named the collection the Iraqi Jewish Archive, or IJA, as a shorthand way of referring to the materials.

This name took on a life of its own. The IJA was never collected as an archive, nor was it the community's *genizah*. It provided a convenient way of referring to a collection that was otherwise difficult to define. The IJA corpus, which will be discussed later in further detail, contains published books, records of daily life, and correspondence from schools and committees of the Baghdadi Jewish Community. There are approximately 2,700 published books, 1,000 unpublished archival entries and 150 other types of entries in the database. An entry in the IJA could be a prayer book, an 800 page ring binder, a group of disassociated book covers, or a single sheet of paper. The IJA includes books as old as the 16th century, and documents as recent as the 20th.

Moving back to the spring of 2003, there was a signed agreement by the Coalition Provisional Authority, or the CPA, and Iraqi representatives with the US government to bring the materials to the United States for preservation and exhibition. The agreement required that outside funding be identified - as the National Archives could not fund the project through its appropriated budget, which focuses on federal records.

The decision to bring the books and documents to the US was based on the limited treatment options in Baghdad or elsewhere in the Middle East at the time. At this time, NARA took complete custody of the collection. The first stop was Texas, where Archives staff worked with a commercial vendor to vacuum freeze-dry the books and documents. Vacuum freeze-drying allowed the ice to sublimate as vapor without ever entering into the liquid stage. The paper and books were left dry, but in the same condition as when they were frozen. The mold was rendered inactive, but remained allergenic. The trunks were then shipped to the National Archives in College Park, MD to wait further funding. The materials were kept in a secure storage facility.

The Baghdadi Jewish Community

To understand more about what is in the IJA, we must spend some time discussing the unique Jewish community of Baghdad. Until recently, Jewish life has been constant in Baghdad. In fact, Jews have been living in what is now the entirety of the country of Iraq for over two millennia. Babylonia in Ancient Mesopotamia is imbedded in biblical lore. Iraqi Muslims and Iraqi Jews both revere local sites of tombs associated with biblical leaders and prophets, such as Daniel, Ezekiel, Ezra, and Jonah. The Babylonian Talmud originated in this region. In the centuries after its compilation in the 5th century, the Talmud became the core text of Judaism. The great 6th to 11th-century academies of Sura and Pumbedita elevated Babylonian rabbinic Judaism to become the dominant approach throughout the Jewish world. Jews lived throughout Iraq in cities like Baghdad, Basrah, and Mosul; a community also lived in Kurdistan in Northern Iraq. While Jewish life in Iraq was quite vibrant in all communities, it was most vibrant in Baghdad. The majority of our collection comes from the Baghdadi Jewish community. It is a small slice of Iraqi life and an even smaller slice of Baghdadi Jewish life. Our collection is comprised mostly of community documents: letters from the offices of the Chief Rabbi, President of the Jewish Community, the Lay Council, the Hevrah Kadisha, and the Jewish hospitals. We have school materials from Baghdadi Jewish schools, but not materials sent home with students. We have students' permanent files, not report cards; copies of blank exams, not taken exams; administrative notes. Books range from Bibles to Talmuds to Hebrew primers, not diaries. The archival materials are from the twentieth century, the earliest documents being from the 1910s.

Babylonian Jews lived, for the most part, amicably with their neighbors for centuries, although with the rise of the modern state of Iraq in 1921, things changed over the next few decades. After the Ottoman Empire was broken up, Britain took control of Iraq before eventually it became its own state, run by King Faisal I. During this time, Babylonian Jews referred to themselves as Arab Jews. Orit Bashkin, in her book *New Babylonians*, refers to this as an extraordinary case: Jews did not consider themselves part of the new nation, but rather part of the new Arab ethnicity. This was not entirely new for Babylonian Jews. During the Ottoman

rule in Iraq, many rose to the upper echelons of society and served in government roles.[1] Until the Farhud, or targeted attack on Jews, in 1941, many Iraqi Jews were strongly anti-Zionist. Only a mere ten years after the Farhud, over 120,000 Iraqi Jews moved to Israel where there is the largest settlement of Iraqi Jews today. Before that, though, during British rule, several Jews were part of Parliament, showing involvement in secular life. Jews spoke Judeo-Arabic, Arabic written in Hebrew characters, and by the early decades of the twentieth century, more Jews spoke Arabic as a part of daily life.

The staff of the Iraqi Jewish Archive project is not entirely sure how the material came to be together. Community members have related various memories. There were edicts to bring Hebrew and Jewish books to the synagogue and some remember government elites coming to their house. Some also say at the synagogue there were trucks that took books away. Somehow these materials ended up in the basement of the Mukhabarat, the name of the secret police headquarters. The documents do not indicate how they ended up there, nor do we know what the Iraqi government did or planned to do with these items. We also do not know what else from the community exists, however, the Director of the Iraqi National Library and Archives has reported in the press that there are additional similar items at the National Library and Archives. The IJA does not include any documents that appear to be taken from homes and is not a comprehensive collection for all the Iraqi Jewish community, let alone even the Baghdadi Jewish community as a whole.

Phase II

Back to the story of the materials, in 2006, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded a grant to the Center for Jewish History to assess the collection and plan for its care. In Phase II of the project, CJH, working with the National Archives, hired a Conservator and a Conservation Technician to work at the National Archives to unpack the trunks and separate the collection into discrete entries. Each entry was then wrapped in an acid-free Permalife paper package and assigned a number from 1 to 3846.

While unpacking the trunks and rehousing the material, they created a database. Each item was described by its physical format and condition as well as conservation needs. Digital photographs were taken for each entry, showing covers, title pages where applicable, and occasionally representative pages. Catalogers hired by the Center for Jewish History, under the direction of Laura Leone, used this online database and its photographs to describe the material as best they could. When possible, catalogers located OCLC records for the books. A panel of subject matter experts then evaluated each entry and made recommendations on digitization and exhibition priorities. Since the materials were still moldy, all work had to be done through the photographs taken at the Archives.

The combined recommendations from Phase II provided the conceptual framework for the National Archives to develop Phase III of the Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Project.

PHASE III

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[1] Orit Bashkin, *New Babylonians: A History of Jews in Modern Iraq* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 4.

The third and final phase of the Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Project was funded in 2011 by the US Department of State with a $2.98 million grant to achieve the following goals:

- • To complete cataloging of the collection and refine the database.
- • To provide conservation treatment.
- • To image all documents and selected books.
- • To create an exhibit in English and Arabic to be shown at the National Archives in Washington, DC, and in Iraq.
- • To create a web site to provide worldwide access to the database and digital images.
- • To provide fellowships for Iraqi conservation professionals.
- • To box, crate, and transport the collection.

NARA's mission is to provide the public access to federal government records and act as custodian of all the permanently valuable records of the United States federal government. Since the IJA was not part of government materials, outside funding and staff was necessary. That being said, NARA has provided leadership, space, and support for the project. Eleven full-time and three part-time staff were hired to accomplish the goals of Phase III. The team was headed by Project Manager, Sue Murphy, who coordinated cataloging, imaging, website development, and conservation. I was hired as the sole librarian; it became clear we needed to work with Arabic Translators as well since I only read Hebrew. We hired Ryann Craig, Jeff Abadie, and Huda Dayton. My role in Phase III had several major aspects:

1) Catalog all the records, creating metadata keyword tags for effective and easy searching.
2) Set priorities for imaging of the unique books, working closely with imaging and conservation staff.
3) Work with the curator for exhibit selection and preparation.
4) Work with an internal team for designing the website.

Cataloging

Phase III's major undertaking was cataloging of all 3,846 entries. With a two year time limit, that meant my priority was to practice meaningful brevity. One of the goals was to create metadata keywords for effective searching. Since the collection included both archival documents and books, we did not want to limit ourselves to traditional library cataloging in MARC formats or using archival standards like Dublin Core. NARA uses its own proprietary software for describing its holdings and it would not work for this collection. This software would also not have been ideal for cataloging the IJA. I was tasked with coming up with a good hybrid of library and archival cataloging and using the flat, non-relational database designed in Phase II until a newer database and website was designed. Creating keywords associated with each entry would be a good way to search the records, rather than just using bibliographic information.

Cataloging Books

For cataloging books, I used information from OCLC when available. If a title page was intact, the book was cataloged in the database with title, title in transliteration, author, publisher,

place of publication, Jewish and Gregorian dates of publication, OCLC number, and language. Conservation added formatting information, such as binding format, cover material, dimensions. We also designated if the book had annotations. Since only a percentage of the books would be completely imaging cover to cover, we all felt it important to capture any annotations, whether an ink stamp, printed insert, or manuscript. If a book was not a priority for imaging we appended the annotation photographs taken by conservation staff to the entry. I also included a very brief description of the book. A few sentences were allocated to each book, usually describing what kind of information is found in the book This example will help show the features of the database and our cataloging method.

This book, IJA record number 925, is a commentary on the Talmud by one of the most famous Baghdadi rabbis, Rabbi Joseph Hayyim, also known as the Ben Ish Hai. This edition was printed in Jerusalem and includes annotations appended to the record. If one scrolls through the images, he can see the interior pages and any photographs of annotations (marked with "Annotations") take in Phase III. One can select the image and hover over the annotation to read it magnified. Using the accordion tabs, you can see the bibliographic, format, and preservation information. We included the basic preservation information for all items to show the work our conservation team took, as well as the type of final housing it received: most books were placed in a custom built computer-generated, acid free box and most archival items were placed in acid free folders and then in acid free document boxes for easy storage.

Some of our records are duplicates. When an item was designated for imaging and we found more than one copy, I worked with our conservation team to select the best candidate for imaging. Sometimes those candidates required the least amount of work, and often it was the most complete copy – it is not uncommon for some of our books to be missing pages at the front or back because of use and damage. We link to the complete record when available.

Notice this record, IJA entry 2010, is identical. The difference is found in the preservation information - it was mold remediated and mended; some books required flattening or disbinding, but this entry did not. We have a link to the viewer and one can also download the item as a PDF.

The last bit of cataloging information that was used for all items, books, archival, other, and fragments, was metadata keywords. Since we did not have time to accurately and fully describe the books, this allowed us to think outside the box.

Creating metadata was a challenging and fun part of the process. I worked closely with National Archives staff to think of ways to bring people to the materials. I was teased by the librarian at the Archives for thinking "like a librarian" rather than a "tagger" or "archivist". I worked with our social media team to think of how patrons might search for and find items. At the National Archives, one of our initiatives is called "Citizen Archivist." It allows members of the public to help the Archives work through their materials and add to description. Users can transcribe documents and add tags to photographs. Looking at the tags added by users proved helpful for creating our own metadata tags. This is an example of tagging [http://research.archives.gov/description/523391]. Citizen Archivists added the tag "barefoot child worker" as well as "boys working" to help researchers and patrons find the items they need. If someone was researching factory conditions in the beginning of the twentieth century, perhaps "barefoot workers" is an important facet that the archivist might not have originally thought of.

Working with the Arabic translation staff, we created nearly 900 unique keyword terms. We wanted to be as broad as "prayer books" and as narrow as "Rosh Hashanah mahzor" in order to allow people to narrow down searches.

Cataloging Archival Entries

For archival materials, metadata became an asset. Archival documents have a wide range of page counts in the IJA. It was not uncommon for pages in archival documents to be as few as five or as many as 800. Sometimes, archival documents came in prepared containers like ring binders or folders we can tell were a unit. Other times, the documents were grouped together by their relationship and location in the trunks. For this collection we maintained original order and did not rearrange any of the documents; we also did not cull any documents. We could not split up an 800 page ring binder into two distinct items; keeping the exact number of entries was crucial for the project. Once again, we were really only able to describe the items in just a few short sentences.

This example, IJA entry 3730, shows the cataloging and description of this type of entry. Rather than authors or publishers, we included includes start and end dates, languages, and the archival material format – multiple papers, ring binder, etc. This specific record is a collection of rosters and student exam scores from the two big, and last remaining, Jewish schools in Baghdad: the Frank Iny School and the Shamash Secondary School. This is a 500 page entry and one of the limitations we had with all entries is we could not use optical character recognition, or OCR, for PDFs, which makes the text of the PDF searchable. The software is not optimal for Hebrew or Arabic, and certainly not useable for handwritten or water damaged items. Again, this is why the metadata proved crucial. We did not want to just "tag" this document with the obvious: exams, Frank Iny School, Shamash School, rosters. We added in the different subjects covered, that it was handwritten rather than printed, there were charts, and so on.

When thinking about website design, we also wanted to bring in aspects of Citizen Archivist and encourage Baghdadi Jewish community members, now scattered worldwide, to interact with these documents and each other. We have an open comment field where members can connect with the records and also play citizen archivist to help identify and translate records. This record here is one of my favorite examples. The commenter writes: "It is unbelievable after 40+ years, I have found my name and a record of my exams results in Mathematics in the fourth secondary academic year. Thank you for the opportunity to be able to share it with my children." The next comment was made directly from the PDF on page 81 clarifying that this was the fourth grade.

The archival entries also have a wide range of appeal. These documents are important to Jewish historians and genealogist, but they are also valuable for historians of the Middle East, education historians, financial historians, sociologists, and more. Many of the items in our collection, like taxi receipts, might have been de-accessioned by other institutions. We are hopeful many people will benefit from our materials.

All of our protocols for the project, including cataloging protocols, can be found on our website: http://www.ija.archives.gov/project/project-documentation.

Setting Priorities for Digitization

The subject matter experts from Phase II provided recommendations for the work to be done in Phase III on the collection. Working from the cover and any title page photos in the database, they suggested digitizing all the unique archival items and about 18% of the books in the collection. Each entry was ranked from zero to three in terms of historical and curatorial significance, artifact and intrinsic value, exhibit interest, and digitization merit. All books given rankings of 1, 2, or 3 were selected for imaging. In addition to these rankings, I selected books that had no copies in OCLC or with only one other location. These selection criteria were not perfect: it is possible not every library, especially small ones, do not add their holdings to OCLC; sometimes we even miscatalog. We decided to err on the side of caution: even if there was, for example, a 1920 imprint of a book in OCLC, we imaging our 1921 edition. Other books selected for imaging were all books printed in Baghdad or for the Baghdadi community and heavily annotated books. We decided Baghdadi imprints, while they might be easily accessible in other locations, are important to the collection and the community. We chose to digitize heavily annotated books, defined as having more than about twenty separate pages with annotations; we did this mostly since we were unclear how the database would react to uploading too many additional photographs. In the end, 13% of the books warranted imaging.

The books selected for imaging first went through conservation treatment. The conservation team remediated the mold by placing items in fume hoods and vacuuming off mold spores with a HEPA-filtered vacuum with special attachments. Paper was mended using traditional conservation techniques and with long-fiber Japanese tissue. Once the books and documents could be safely handled, they were sent to the imaging lab where the staff can capture anywhere from 600 to 1200 images per day using overhead cameras. Items were placed under a glass-topped book cradle when condition allowed, otherwise, books were placed in cradles above the glass.

The selection of the items for imaging also demonstrates the teamwork of the IJA project. Working on a project of this scope demands teamwork and constant communication. This project was truly a team effort and my tasks were closely tied in to the work of the conservation and the imaging staff. One of the major constraints we had was the timeframe. This was a two year project, with no flexibility on the end date. Its success was due to the close collaboration among the team members. There was a formal process of establishing guidelines for the project, and an informal process of communication throughout the project as new challenges were discovered. Conservation staff often called upon me to piece together fragments of Hebrew text, and both the conservation staff and I were often called down to the imaging lab to consult on difficult items. Further, I worked with the imaging staff to check 100% of records. Imaging staff matched each leaf of physical archival documents with its digital surrogate while I read through each book to ensure complete capture and that no page was missed. Most staff had no previous experience with Semitic languages and could not quickly identify the skipped pages, directions of books, or even when a document was right side up. Conservation staff inserted directional flags for each item and we had posters of the Hebrew and Arabic alphabets in the conservation and imaging labs so after a few months, everyone was more familiar with the text, but we frequently called on each other for help. Having a team that both loved baking and eating did not hurt our success either.

Exhibit

Part of the original agreement of bringing the materials to the United States for preservation was to include an exhibition. Working with an outside curator, Gabe Goldstein, the National Archives launched the exhibit "Discovery and Recovery: Preserving Iraqi Jewish Heritage" in early November 2013. The exhibit discussed the history of the Baghdadi Jewish community from the time of the Second Temple through the end of the community using items from the collection to help tell the story. Twenty-four items were on display, ranging from individual leaves of archival documents to complete books. The exhibit was well reviewed, well received, and well attended. People came from all over the world, and certainly from all over the east coast, to view the exhibit. Because of demand, for the first time, the Archives provided docent-led tours of a non-permanent exhibit. The three tours offered each week were often sold-out.

I worked closely with the curator to select documents. It was a challenge: the exhibit preparations started before we had begun to fully catalog the items. The curator was located in New York but we remained in constant communication, especially finding slightly better candidates for selections and even a last minute substitution. The last section of the exhibit is about the preservation of the materials and highlights NARA's efforts. I like to say my colleagues are magicians. Conservation staff is able to take books that could not be handled and sometimes resemble paper sculptures, and make them useable again. Our imaging specialists are likewise incredible. The equipment they use is not a regular flat bed scanner, but rather a highly sophisticated imaging capture system. Staff is able to take these documents and make then available within a few days of image capture.

Website

In order to make the IJA accessible, a website needed to be designed ija.archives.gov. Since NARA could not use any of its funds for the project, we again used funds designated by the State Department hired an outside contractor to design the website and database. We had the combined fortune and misfortune of designing a database from scratch. While we had the basic flat database from Phase II, we needed something more robust and a database that could handle searching across many ways of transliterating languages and connect records with multiple types of images. In addition to the images captures in Phase II, we needed a place to upload the annotation photographs taken in Phase III. We also needed to connect the completely imaged items to the proper entry. Proper naming schemes were crucial for these tasks.

My desire for searching was to create a browsing feel by using facets. Many library catalogs are going towards that feature, found commonly in other websites like Amazon.com. Since many of our users would be novices and there was no way for easy instruction, we wanted users to be able to put in very broad search terms like "prayer book" or "Talmud" or the name of a school in Baghdad and be able to whittle down their search by material types, topics, language, place of publication, date and decade of publication, and items with completely digitized entries only. For example, a search for "Talmud" yields 226 results http://www.ija.archives.gov/search/talmud. These facets allow patrons to find their results if they do not know exactly what they want to find.

The searching proved difficult. While the database could handle searching in another language, searching using diacritics for transliterated letters and alternative spellings was not as easy. I needed to spend a copious amount of time creating a thesaurus. In the end, we are happy

with the result of the database. The search feature is not perfect: it searches the back end of the database fields, which could not be suppressed. Another problem is numbers. If a patron wanted to find their school records from 1968 and searches "1968", she will get 13 results and of those, only 4 are archival records. However, those are only records from the year 1968; not from the years 1960-1970, inclusive. Someone might do better searching for "School records" and then narrowing down by decade.

I have gotten a few requests via email messages for help searching the database, but not as many as I suspected. Our statistics are pretty good: we had over 3,000 unique sessions during the past month and the average user stays on for almost 10 minutes. And users are connecting with us and each other using the comments field.

Aside from the catalog, the website features information about the project. Under the Preservation Project heading http://www.ija.archives.gov/project/preservation-project, users can learn about the history of the IJA and its various phases, read about the steps taken in Phase III, and download the project documentations. The exhibit is replicated online http://www.ija.archives.gov/exhibit/exhibit. When entered, you can view all the items on exhibit. One nice thing about an online exhibit is users can view the entire book. In physical exhibits, only one page or a spread is viewable, so we added a "Learn More" button to each item. The link takes you to the entry page where one can view the complete cataloging of the item and also read the entire book or archival entry. Lastly, we have a "Connect With Us" page http://www.ija.archives.gov/content/connect-us where users can view videos going behind the scenes of conservation and imaging labs and see broadcasts of events at the Archives done in conjunction with the project. Users can also send email queries to staff.

Interesting Finds

What we have found in the IJA collection has surprised us. Most of the books are not really unique; these are books one expects to find in any major institution. Some of my favorite books are the ones printed in Baghdad, especially the *Alpha Beta*. We have 64 copies of this book. Some are in bad condition due to the water event; others are in bad condition because of use. Several copies have doodles and other annotations from students. The marginalia in the collection shows these books were not sitting on a shelf somewhere collecting dust, but being used, even as the government was taking away citizenship and assets. Examples are IJA entries number 293, 1082, and 274.

One great find was made by a colleague at the National Library of Israel. We found a few manuscript notes tucked into the pages of an otherwise unassuming Miḳra'ot Gedolot from Exodus and sent those pages to the imaging label rather than treating them as an annotation, IJA entry number 37. The pages are in Judeo-Arabic and I could not read them When our website launched, Dr. Ezra Chwat at the Department of Manuscripts and Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the National Library of Israel, emailed me that these pages are from Rabbi Joseph Hayyim, the Ben Ish Hai, in his hand with his signature. Included are drafts of sermons on later chapters in Exodus. A letter found in these documents discloses the structure of

the sermons before they were printed, and includes a story published separately. Scholars had no idea that the stories were originally an organic part of the sermons.[2]

Educational historians can also benefit from the IJA: not only do we have student files, we also have administrative documents like exams, rubrics for grading essay contents, architectural plans for new schools or extensions (example: IJA entry 3099), and letters advertising teaching positions at the school. The Jewish schools were considered some of the best in Baghdad. I once gave a tour of the exhibit in Washington, DC to a Baghdadi Christian who was also forced out of Iraq about the same time as many of the Jews. He remembered that the Frank Iny School was the best in the city; he compared it to Eton in the UK and Exeter in the US. We also know from records that not only Jewish students attended these schools but also Christian and Muslims did as well. (Another example: IJA entry number 3709.)

One of the wonderful things we have are student photographs in the school administration folders. Many Baghdadi Jews who stayed in Iraq through the 1950s and 1960s left quickly and with no personal items. Although many of the photographs were damaged in the water, we also have plenty of student photographs intact. We know community members are finding these very special and are downloading the photos. Our imaging staff took close up images of just the photographs when available for just this reason. (Examples: IJA entry numbers 2636, 3755, and 3070.)

The Jewish community documents show a vibrant community even with the animosity towards Jews in Iraq. There are letters to the chief Rabbi about needing financial assistance, wedding invitations (example: IJA entry number 3077) and more. We have letters inviting the Chief Rabbi to graduation at schools across Baghdad (example: IJA entry number 3077), requests for help in Jewish divorces, wills designating money for charitable trusts, and a letter from the American Jewish actor Booth Coleman looking for a Jewish pen pal (example: IJA entry number 3697), and many, many more. We also have employment and financial records. For anyone interested in financial information – how much insurance policies cost or how much a secretary earned – from Baghdad in the 1960s, the IJA will have that information.

The Present and Future of the IJA

As of now, all the conservation and preservation work on the collection is complete. 100% of records are available online. The public can provide comments through the end of September 2014. The exhibit at the National Archives closed in January 2014 and was displayed February through May of this year at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City. The Iraqi Embassy issued a statement in May that the exhibit and its related materials will remain in the US and continue to travel to other US cities yet to be determined.

We worked with two Iraqi conservators from the Iraqi National Library and Archive, who came as part of a three month fellowship. They worked with the conservation team to conserve IJA books and documents, and discussed long term care of the IJA collection. The original agreement stipulated that the collection is to return to Iraq.

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[2] Ezra Chwat, "Manuscript Findings in the Iraqi Jewish Archives," גילוי מילתא בעלמא *Giluy Milta B'alma*, November 25, 2013, http://imhm.blogspot.co.il/2013/11/manuscript-findings-in-iraqi-jewish.html.

The National Archives is not involved in the diplomatic discussions related to the future disposition of the collection. That is the role of the State Department. Our role is to provide for the preservation and access to the collection of books and documents. The materials are now available free for the world wide community on our website. www.ija.archives.gov