# From Paper to Digital: How One Library Transformed Itself
## *Susan Kusel*

**Description:** Have you always wanted to join the digital revolution but time and budgets have stopped you? Has the project seemed too overwhelming and you don't know where to begin? Learn how a synagogue library managed to transform their card catalog into a fully digital collection within fifteen months using only a part-time librarian, a small budget and volunteers. The project will be broken down into manageable steps including how to recruit and train volunteers from existing synagogue groups, how to select a database and how to organize the workflow. Unlike public or school libraries, many synagogue and center libraries are not yet digitized due to the size of their staff and their collections. Find out how this daunting task can become manageable, even if you have no starting catalog at all.

**Susan Kusel** is the librarian at Temple Rodef Shalom in Falls Church, VA. She is also the children's book buyer and selector for Words bookstore in Maplewood, NJ and the owner of Dream On Books, a children's book consulting company. She has been a children's librarian at Arlington Public Library, a children's bookseller for Politics and Prose and Child's Play and worked for the Imagination Stage theater company. She was a member of the 2015 Caldecott Medal selection committee and is currently a member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award committee. She lives with her family in Arlington, VA.

Where do you start?

<u>Ask yourself big questions</u>

-What do you want the system to look like when you're done?

-Do you want to change anything (cataloging) from the way it is now?

-This is a great time to change things. If you want to re-catalog, now is the time to do it.
For example, if you want to change how you label your CDs, do it now. You're building a catalog from scratch. Make it the way you want it.

-Set a goal of desired and reasonable time for completion. Factor in the size of the library and the expected amount of labor available to do the project. Breaking it into smaller, more achievable goals can be helpful too.
 For example, maybe you want the whole project to take two years, but you want to finish the picture books in two months.

How many people do you need? Do you need volunteers? It depends on your completion goal and the size of the library.

Computer systems

What are the most important things for you in a computer system?

What are the deal breakers- the things you absolutely have to have?

Which things will prevent you from buying a system?

Will you use self-check-out?

How high can you go in terms of a budget?

Will the program be running off your server's or the software company's?

Examine all the costs in the system you choose. Are there any additional costs for improved functionality? Are there annual costs?

Supplies

What do physical supplies do you need to make the process happen?

What is already on your books? Barcodes, book pockets, spine labels, borrower cards?

Do you need barcode scanners, software, printers? Book carts?

Price it out, shop around, read reviews. Do you need the $500 scanner, or will the $200 one do?

Sticky notes- my sticky note budget is through the roof. Sticky notes used for cataloging, to put on the sides of carts to determine what step of the process the books are going through, to convey notes about the processing of each book, etc.

These are all part of your start-up costs.

Getting ready

Weed as much as possible before you start.

You have to be willing to touch the book five times as you process it into the system. If that isn't worth it to you, weed it.

Working with volunteers

Use your synagogue's resources to ask for volunteers. Advertise in your monthly bulletin, send out announcements to your brotherhood and sisterhood. Put the word out that you need help.

Find out each person's strength and what they are most comfortable doing. Some people may prefer working on the computer, while others may be better at putting on barcodes.

Write everything down. If there are seven steps to a process, write it out clearly. You may be relying on volunteers, who are not as familiar with the books and processes as you.

Figure out how many times a book needs to be handled- and how many times you are the one that has to handle it.

Entering in the computer

Start with picture books and work your way through fiction, non-fiction and reference.

Put hard books to the side- don't let them slow you down. Gather them together and do them at the end of a session.

Do original cataloging last.

In my library, these are the five times we touch a book to catalog it:

1. Add barcode and address
2. Enter into computer
3. Print spine labels
4. Put spine labels on books
5. Re-shelve

Figure out the process for your library.

Additional notes

Label everything. The carts, books you're not finished with, etc.

Make notes on the books- sticky notes- needed for processing in the computer, what labels to put the books.

If you take large sections of books off the shelves- put signs on the shelves so your patrons don't think there is a problem. Also label the book carts with signs that the books are being processed.

Continue to reassess and change the process as you go through it- to optimize it for your library.


Please feel free to contact with any questions.

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