Putting History in their Hands: White Gloves Sessions as a User Outreach Tool

Association of Jewish Libraries Conference
June 22, 2015
History of the Collection

• Background

• Baltimore Hebrew University

• Towson University

• Integration of library collections

• Special Collections and Archives
Contents

- Bible and Religion
- Rabbinics
- Jewish History
- Archaeology
- Jewish Philosophy
- Political Science
- Israel and the Middle East
- Sociology
- Jewish Education
- Language and Literature
- Fine Arts
- Genealogy
- Liturgy
- Juvenile books
Special collections

• Holocaust Survivor Testimonies Video Archives
• Memorial books (Yizkor books)
• Rare Book Collection
• Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Collection
Baltimore Hebrew Institute Collection

Photo by Kanji Takeno, TU photographer

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Baltimore Hebrew Institute Collection

Photo: Joyce Garczynski

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Special Collections and Archives

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Concept of White Gloves Sessions

- Raise awareness about collection
- Marketing tool for library
- Novel approach to special collections
- Possible sponsorship opportunities
First TU White Gloves Session

- Holocaust Remembrance Day Exhibit
- Packaged for transportability
- Lecture
- Description of items
- Hands-on
Holocaust Remembrance Day Exhibit
Holocaust Remembrance Day Exhibit
Religious books concealed behind a wall in the Great Synagogue in Amsterdam, Holland, in an attempt to safeguard them against seizure or destruction. They were confiscated in 1943 by German soldiers and set aside for special German research institutes. These books were possibly among those that passed through the Offenbach Archival Depot.

Thwarted Efforts to Conceal

From “An album that documents the confiscation of cultural property by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg,” by Captain Isaac Bencowitz, Director of the Offenbach Archival Depot. Photograph courtesy of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority.
Seized books were sent to storage or set aside for special German research institutes such as the Reichsinstitut für Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands. In this photograph, workers at one of the German research institutes carry out the registration of books seized by German soldiers.

From “An album that documents the confiscation of cultural property by the Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg,” by Captain Isaac Bencowitz, Director of the Offenbach Archival Depot. Photograph courtesy of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Authority.
JCR Bookplate and Offenbach Stamp

Books donated by the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. (JCR), are identified by a special bookplate usually applied to the inside front cover. Many of them are also identified by the round stamp of the Offenbach Archival Depot (OAD). This book has both the JCR bookplate and the OAD stamp on its inside front cover.

Johann David Michaelis. *Mosaisches Recht*. Rutlinger: J. Grözinger, 1785. RBR217 v. 3-4

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Many seized books were stamped and set aside to be used for anti-Jewish propaganda in special German research institutes. This book is stamped with the eagle emblem of the Nazi state surrounded by the text *Reichsinstitut fur Geschichte des neuen Deutschlands* (Reich Institute for the History of the New Germany). The Reichsinstitut had a special department for study of the so-called “Jewish Question.”

Moses Maimonides. *Mishneh Torah*. Amsterdam: ‘Emanu’el ben Yosef ‘Atias, 1702. BM520.84.A2 1702 / RBR710 v. 4 c. 1
White Gloves Session Display
Components of sessions

- Story
- Theme
- Artifacts
- Historical context
- White gloves
- Q&A
- Handouts
Put Your Hands on History with Towson University
Special Collections and Archives’
White Glove Sessions

Books of the People: Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Books in the
Baltimore Hebrew Institute Collection at Towson University

During World War II, millions of pieces of European Jewish Cultural heritage were seized by German soldiers and as Allied forces moved across Europe and concluded the war, they discovered thousands of storehouses of books, newspapers, and ritual objects. Much of this material passed through the Offenbach Archival Depot, a clearinghouse established by the U.S. Army to identify the owners of these cultural artifacts and restore them to their rightful homes. However, because of the massive loss of life or lack of marks of ownership, half a million items remained without heirs. The U.S. Army transferred custodianship to the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. (JCR). Using a distribution formula based on the locations of newly established Jewish communities around the world, JCR found new homes for these items in well-established centers of Jewish education and learning, including Baltimore Hebrew College which is now the Baltimore Hebrew Institute (BHI) at Towson University. The BHI Library collections are now housed at Towson University’s Albert S. Cook Library.

During this White Glove session, University Archivist Nadia Nass will give a talk about the journey of JCR books through the Offenbach Archival Depot. Participants will learn not only about this little-known World War II story, but also about the care and use of rare books and their importance to the cultural heritage of a community. Using white gloves, participants will have the opportunity to closely examine the characteristics and features of the books as well as various stamps and markings documenting the journey of the books.

To set up a White Glove Session with your class, religious or community organization, please contact Towson University Archivist Nadia Nass at 410-704-2398 or nnass@towson.edu.
Sponsorship opportunities brochure

Preserve the Past to Ensure the Future
The Baltimore Hebrew Institute Joseph Meyerhoff Collection

How you can help
Items in need of repair

David Castro Tarte's volume of commemorative addresses given at dedication of Amsterdam Synagogue, 1676.

Need: cleaning, reinforcement
Estimated cost: $2,000

Menahem ben Sasson's handwritten Siddur on parchment, ca. 1495.

Need: binding restoration
Estimated cost: $2,875


Need: binding restoration
Estimated cost: $8,275

Bernard Pratte's The ceremonies and religious customs of the various nations of the known world (vol. 1), London: 1735-37.

Need: cleaning, rewinding
Estimated cost: $6,175

Bahya ben Asher's commentary on the Pentateuch, 1492.

Need: full restoration
Estimated cost: $11,500

About the Collection

When Baltimore Hebrew University closed in 2009, their 70,000-volume library collection came to Towson's Albert S. Cook Library and became The Baltimore Hebrew Institute Joseph Meyerhoff Collection.

This collection is the largest Judaica library in the Southeast and includes rare biblical commentaries (some dating from as early as the 16th century), Holocaust memorial testimonies, as well as a number of artworks and ritual items.

In order to ensure that future generations have access to the history and traditions represented by the items in this collection, Albert S. Cook Library needs your help. Many of the objects in the collection are in need of preservation and repair and the library cannot undertake these processes alone.

To find out how you can help, contact Towson University Archivist Neda Nasr at 410-704-2988 or nnasr@towson.edu.

TOWSON UNIVERSITY
Goals of White Gloves Sessions

- Exposure for collection
- Appreciate value of books as artifacts
- Promote appreciation for curators of collections
- Generate sponsorship for preservation of items/collection
- Plant seeds for future donations of material
Adaptation to other collections

- History of institution
- Local history artifacts
- Donor collection
- Examples from Towson University
Methodology

- Identify core theme
- Research
- Supporting documentation
- Select target audience
- Select location(s)
- Publicity
- Logistics
Additional Resources


- ALA-RUSA: [http://www.ala.org/rusa/sections/history/resources/pubs/usingprimarysources](http://www.ala.org/rusa/sections/history/resources/pubs/usingprimarysources)


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