Between Being-Wise and Not-Knowing-What-To-Ask: Jewish Librarianship and Digital Humanities

Prof. dr. Emile Schrijver • Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana • University of Amsterdam

e.g.l.schrijver@uva.nl
The Historical Jewish Press website has been upgraded!
The new site has more information, offered in a new, user-friendly interface.

New Site:

Please note: The site is compatible with all commonly used browsers, and Internet Explorer version 9 or higher. Additionally, your collection will not be automatically updated and you should re-save them in the new system. We thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Old site:
Ketubot

The site presented here includes over 4200 ketubot from collections all over the world, including the National Library’s collection. This vast and rich collection of ketubot onto one site allows for a wide, comprehensive and in depth look at the ketubah as a Jewish document, a Jewish creation and a vital historical source.

2500 Years of Ketubot

The purpose of the Jewish ketubah is to outline the rights and responsibilities of the groom, in relation to the bride. The ketubah contains three parts: on the part of the groom, which is the primary objective of the ketubah: the amount of money he is obligated to pay, as well as the addition to the ketubah, should he choose to add to the base amount. On the wife’s part, the dowry is detailed. In addition, the dowry also includes the terms of the ketubah, which were meant to ensure the rights of the woman during the marriage and in the case that the marriage is nullified.

Ketubot have not changed much over the centuries. The marriage documents found in Aramaic papyriuses from the days of Artaxerxes the King of Persia from the 5th century B.C.E., are very similar to ketubah documents from other eras and even to modern day ketubot.
SfarData

The Codicological Data-Base of the Hebrew Palaeography Project
The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities
An English version of Malachi Beit-Ar=====é’s book, Hebrew Codicology: Historical and Comparative Typology of Hebrew Medieval Codices based on the Documentation of the Extant Dated Manuscripts in Quantitative Approach, is being prepared and will be included in the online database SifData of the Hebrew Paleography Project of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities in collaboration of the National Library of Israel (sifdata.nli.org.il). It will also be published by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

LIST OF CHAPTERS AND MAIN SUB-CHAPTERS

Chapter I: Introduction
The codex
Codicology – development, approaches to the study of hand-produced books, trends
Hebrew codicology
Extant manuscripts, geo-cultural classification of codicological practices and types of book script
The singularity of Hebrew book production
The indispensability of the comparative perspective for Hebrew codicology

Chapter II: Colophon components and scribal formulae
Names of manuscript producers and division of labour
The oldest still functioning Jewish library in the world.
Reshimat sefarim. Catalogue of Dutch, French, Spanish and Italian books and manuscripts collected by Moses Teixeira de Mattos.

Letter by 24 members of Yesiva Meshino to hail Shabtal Tavi as Messiah.

Collection of Hebrew poetry by members of Mikra Kodesh.

Astrological annotations copied by David Franco Mendes.

Ahashat Olam. Hebrew poem and drama for the wedding of Levi Oppenheim and Rebeccah Cohen.

Sefer Heshek Shelomoh. Commentary of the prayers recited throughout the year.

Sukat David. Collection of poetry by David Franco Mendes.

Hebrew translation of the libretto of the oratorio Esther.

EH 47 A 02

ABOUT THE MANUSCRIPT

Books X-XIV (- volume IV) of Moses
Maimonides' halakhic codex Mishneh Torah,
copied by Barzilay b. Jacob Halevi for Joseph
b. Abraham b. David. Ownership inscription on
f. 2r of both volumes: מִדְרֶכֶח הַבְּהַר מִשְׁנָה תֹּרָה
[Pordekhay of Buttrick]. Narbonne, 1282.

On the first f. of vol. III a vellum leaf is pasted
with the title: נִיטְקָי / מִדְרֶכֶח הַבְּהַר
In large, square writing in blue and red ink,
within an ornamental frame; on the first f. of
vol. IV a similar leaf can be found, bearing the
title: יִנְחָשׁ [Mishneh Torah] / אֲשֶׁר לְהָוֹלָךְ The
beginning lines of vol. III and vol. IV are
written in an ornamental coloured frame
and laid in with gold. In vol. III and vol. IV some
lines have been erased. At the end of both
volumes a Latin inscription has been added by
the censor, [Donino] Jac[obus] Geraldini,
dating 1555.
Opening up the Hebrew manuscript collection

This summer saw the beginning of a major project to digitise 1250 Hebrew manuscripts held in the British Library. Funded mainly by the Polonsky Foundation, the three-year project aims to make these invaluable manuscripts freely available to scholars and the public worldwide. The manuscripts are being photographed in-house by the Library’s Imaging Services team, and stored in preservation format. Detailed catalogue records will be available for each manuscript, to enable users to search by various fields such as date, place of origin, author/scribe and keywords to find manuscripts of relevance to their work. All manuscripts will be displayed in their entirety on the Library’s Digitised Manuscripts site free of charge. We will also create a special ‘tour’ of the manuscripts on the website, highlighting aspects and themes of the collection in order to introduce it to wider audiences.

Acknowledged as one of the finest and most important in the world, the British Library’s Hebrew manuscripts collection is a vivid testimony to the creativity and intense scribal activities of Eastern and Western Jewish communities spanning over 1,000 years. In the collection there are well over 3,000 individual objects, though for this project we are focusing on just 1,250 manuscripts.
MS. Kennicott 3

A 13th-century Hebrew Bible originally collected by Benjamin Kennicott

View the full manuscript ▶

MS. Kennicott 3 is a wonderful and rare example of a dated and lavishly illustrated Ashkenazi Pentateuch with the Five Scrolls and the Additional Readings from the Prophets. Although its place or places of origin are still not clear, ranging from Northern France to Krein in Northeast Switzerland, what is clear is the quality and imaginative power of the illuminations, as well as the coherent arrangement of the various components of the text on the page. The manuscript offers ample opportunities for further research.

Related Works
Braginsky Collection
Braginsky Collection

Start (with film)

Community

Legal experts

Artists

Herlingen

The outside world

Spirituality

Family

Bible

Ketubbot

Megillot

Impressions of the exhibition
Megillot (Esther Scrolls)
1648, Venice

The lavish decoration of this printed and hand painted ketubbah attests to the high esteem in which this art form was held by wealthy Sephardim living in the ghetto in Venice. The practice of ketubbah illustration was introduced in the ghetto by the ponentini community, exiled immigrants from the Iberian Peninsula, who continued this tradition from medieval Spain. As the exceptionally large dowry of this ketubbah shows, the leading ponentini families were extremely successful in Venice. The text is divided into two sections: the ketubbah proper at the right and the conditions at the left. They are set within a double

SCHÖNE SEITEN
Jüdische Schriftkultur aus der Braginsky Collection

Einleitung René Braginsky
Einführung in die Ausstellung
Impressum
Frühere Ausstellungen
Katalog
Weitere Webseiten
Ketubbah

1841

Lugo


Auch bei dieser Ketubbah ist der Vertragstext auf einen älteren Rahmen geklebt. Deshalb erscheint das hebräische Eingangswort des Vertrags-elm


The People in the Books: Hebraica and Judaica Manuscripts from Columbia University Libraries

A printed book and a manuscript codex may contain the same text, but one can argue that the latter is inherently richer. The printing press produced a multitude of identical copies, but each manuscript is unique and individual. In a manuscript, each page had to be carefully prepared and every letter required painstaking work. Ultimately, each manuscript contains more than just the text within it. Isaac Mendelssohn, author of the first catalog of the Hebrew manuscripts at Columbia, wrote, “An old Hebrew book is...more than a mere collection of bound sheets on which a given text is [written]. The notes on the flyleaves, the remarks on the margins the names of its various owners, and the countries in which it saw service actually make it into two books - one containing the text, the passive part, and the other the history of the persons who owned and used it.”

This exhibition attempts to show the second kind of book: the book that tells a story about its authors, its owners, and its users. Occasionally, the story is found within the main portion of the text, but it is also found in the paratext: in the wine stains on a Passover Haggadah, in the candle wax in a prayer book, or in an odd notation on a title page or in a colophon. On a journey through the exhibit, it is our hope that visitors will find at least one story that inspires, intrigues, or ignites the imagination.
Library Exhibitions from the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies

Current Exhibition

13th Century Entanglements: Judaism, Christianity & Islam

The monotheistic cultures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam during the Middle Ages have too often been studied in isolation from one another, with notable exceptions focused on the contacts that occurred at the point of the sword. Developing a more integrated picture of the complex, entangled relationships that bound together Latin and Eastern Christianity with Islamic Africa and Asia during the 13th Century C.E. and the position of Jews living in and between these geo-cultural zones, was the challenge taken up by the 2012-13 postgraduate Fellows at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at Penn. The Fellows studied diverse phenomena such as the creation of new philosophic and scientific cultures, the emergence of medieval halakhah (Jewish legal praxis), the diffusion of Kabbalah, the establishment of new mendicant orders, the institutionalization of Sufi brotherhoods, the rise of universities, and the role of inquisitors. They were studied not only as isolated phenomena but in their mutual interrelations. This online exhibition, entitled “13th Century Entanglements: Judaism, Christianity, & Islam” features a number of original sources that were drawn upon by these scholars in the course of their research: Hebrew, Latin and Arabic manuscripts and early printed texts which illustrate a range of topics such as medieval liturgical poetry, law, rhetoric, philosophy, science, magic, social history, gender relations, inter-communal contact, conflict and other forms of entanglement both positive and negative.

Jews & Journeys: Travel & the Performance of Jewish Identity

The subject of travel and its complex range of practices and representations has provoked intense scholarly interest in recent years. Historically, Jewish travel has taken on many forms and is documented in a wide array of primary sources: medieval Jewish merchant records; legends of the Wandering Jew; travel itineraries, real and imagined; accounts of pilgrims to the Holy Land; early sixteenth-century Hebrew manuscript reports of the discovery of America. Notably, the subject of Jewish virtual travel by photograph or postal exchange, through journalistic reportage, motion picture footage, postcard images of the exotic as well as contemporary tourism to Israel also has attracted scholarly attention. What cultural and ideological work is performed by these texts and what kinds of images of self and other are generated through them? These are some of the complex themes and challenges that the 2011-12 Katz Fellows addressed, a sampling of which are on display in this year’s web exhibit.

Taking Turns: New Perspectives on Jews & Conversion

“Taking Turns” takes as its starting point the idea of converts and conversion – an unstable subject, in the double sense of a topic very much in need of definition, and a model of individual and group life that does not assume a fixed or univocal “identity.” Through the study of conversion, our understanding of the very meaning of “Judaic,” “Christian,” and “Islamic” identities has been complicated and even transformed.
THE ESSLINGEN MAHZOR

A Digital Reunion Of The New Amsterdam And The Old Amsterdam Volumes
The Friedberg Genizah Project Website (FGPW)

The Friedberg Genizah Project (FGP) is an ambitious undertaking which, we hope, will greatly advance Genizah research. One of the main tasks it has set for itself is to computerize the entire corpus of Genizah manuscripts and Genizah-related materials: images, identifications, catalogs, metadata, transcriptions, translations and bibliographical references. FGPW is the Internet Website on which the project's main results will be displayed.

If you are interested in Genizah research or in Jewish (or Islamic) Studies in general, you are cordially invited to register to the site. The site is evolving and growing constantly. Development and maintenance are carried out by Genazim (FGP Computerization Unit), headed by Prof. Yaacov Choueka.

Accredited users can now add to the Genizah website varied information on Genizah fragments. If you are willing to contribute such information now or in the future, please click here. Thank you for sharing your knowledge with your colleagues.

Requirements

Browsers: IE 8.0 and up, Firefox, Safari, Chrome

Portal

View additional Jewish Manuscripts projects via the Jewish Manuscript Preservation Society portal.

Enter FJMS Portal

This website will be undergoing general maintenance every Sunday early morning (usually 6:00 - 8:00) Israeli time, during which some features may be slow or unresponsive for very short periods of time.

About the Website Functions:

General Information
Images & Quick View
Identifications & Cataloging Data
Scanned Catalogs
Transcriptions & Transliterations
Bibliographical References

Statistics

Genizah Updates

Genizah Codex:
PDF and Search
Call for papers
Vol. 9 has just been published!

Permission to use the site is granted to:

[Additional information]

This document is for the use of the Association of Jewish Libraries. It may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without the written permission of the publisher.
The Friedberg Genizah Research Project is a comprehensive project that one of its most important goals is to computerize the Cairo Genizah. The project's website includes more than 450,000 high-quality digital images of manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, and for many of them there is related information such as identification, catalogs published, transliterations, joins and bibliographical references. By presenting this information, any site visitor can get all the known published information about the requested item.

Genizah researchers or scholars in Jewish studies or related study fields, can register to the website, view information and enter new information themselves. The site is developed and maintained by "Genazim", the computing unit of the Friedberg Genizah Project, led by Professor Yaacov Choueka.

The Genazim mobile app enables one to view the Genizah manuscripts on mobile devices. Access to images is very fast and requires prior knowledge of the image FGP number. The application includes basic image processing functions such as zooming in and zooming out.

(Version 1.0)
Treasures of the Bavarian State Library

Anonymous
Notitia Dignitatum / Register of Dignitaries

Place Of Publication: Spires
Year Of Publication: 1542; 1550-1551

Language: Latin
Pages: 222 leaves

Proceedings of the 49th Annual Conference
of the Association of Jewish Libraries (Las Vegas, NV - June 22-25, 2014)
The Digital Dead Sea Scrolls

Great Isaiah Scroll
The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa) is one of the original seven Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in Qumran in 1947. It is the largest (734 cm) and best preserved...more »

War Scroll
The War Scroll (1QM), popularly known as "The War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness," is one of the seven original Dead Sea Scrolls discovered...more »

Commentary on the Habakkuk Scroll
The Commentary on Habakkuk (Peshar Habakkuk, 1QpHab), is a relative complete scroll (1.48 m long) and one of the seven original Dead Sea Scrolls discovered...more »

Temple Scroll
The Temple Scroll (11Q19) was almost certainly discovered in 1956 in Cave 11, located about two kilometers north of Qumran. The manuscript is written...more »

Community Rule Scroll
The Community Rule (Babkh Hayyadim, 1QS), formerly called the "Manual of Discipline," is the major section of one of the first seven scrolls discovered...more »

"We are privileged to house in the Israel Museum’s Shrine of the Book the best preserved and most complete Dead Sea Scrolls ever discovered," said James S. Snyder, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. "They are of paramount importance among the touchstones of monotheistic world heritage, and they represent unique highlights of our Museum’s encyclopedic holdings. Now, through our partnership with Google, we are able to bring these treasures to the broadest possible public."...more »
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, The Great Isaiah Scroll

Chapter 1: Verse 1

Chapter 2: Verse 6

But you, house of Jacob, have abandoned your people. For they take their fill from the east, and they are fortune-tellers like the Philistines; they even shake hands with the children of foreigners.

Translation: Professor Peter Flint (Western Trinity University, Canada) and Professor Eugene Ulrich (University of Haifa, Israel)
Susan Schreibman: What is Digital Humanities?

- One line answers
- Work alone or with somebody next to you or behind you
Schreiber: It’s about connections

- people
- technology
- data
- methods
- tools

questions?
Susan Schreibman 2013
“Do you have to know how to code? I’m a tenured professor of Digital Humanities and I say ‘yes.’”

“Personally, I think Digital Humanities is about building things. [...] If you are not making anything, you are not...a digital humanist.”
“I’ve had the pleasure of talking with lots and lots of people in Digital Humanities from among a wide range of disciplines . . . since the mid-nineties. I’ve discovered that there are lots of things that distinguish an historian from, say, a literary critic or a philosopher, and there are a lot of differences between 1995 and 2011. But to me, there’s always been a profound — and profoundly exciting and enabling — commonality to everyone who finds their way to dh. And that commonality, I think, involves moving from reading and critiquing to building and making.”
“They now move front and center inasmuch as the advent of Digital Humanities implies a reinterpretation of the humanities as a generative enterprise: one in which students and faculty alike are making things as they study and perform research, generating not just texts (in the form of analysis, commentary, narration, critique) but also images, interactions, cross-media corpora, software, and platforms.”
“The capacity with digital media to create enhanced forms of curation brings humanistic values into play in ways that were difficult to achieve in traditional museum or library settings. Rather than being viewed as autonomous or self-evident, artifacts can be seen being shaped by and shaping complex networks of influence, production, dissemination, and reception, animated by multilayered debates and historical forces.”
“Digital humanities projects are using tools like 3-D mapping, electronic literary analysis, digitization, and advanced visualization techniques in interdisciplinary research that aims to shed new light on humanities research. With online publishing and virtual archives, creators and users experiment and interact with source materials in ways that yield new findings, while also facilitating community building and information sharing.”
Dov Winer 2014 on Virtual Research Environments

“A set of online tools and other network resources and technologies interoperating with each other to facilitate or enhance the processes of research practitioners within and across institutional boundaries. A key characteristic of a VRE is that it facilitates collaboration amongst researchers and research teams providing them with more effective means of collaboratively collecting, manipulating and managing data, as well as collaborative knowledge creation.”

[Virtual Research Environments comprise] “digital infrastructure and services which enable research to take place.”
www.yerusha.eu
What is wise?: Recommendations 1

• We should continue to digitize our collections
• We should continue to work on clear standards for our metadata
• We should keep our content free
• We should incorporate digital workflows into our daily routine, including the production of, basic, metadata for all our holdings
What is wise?: Recommendations 2

• We should continue to improve the navigation of our more traditional websites

• We should convince our donors of the educational and public relations potential of our digitizing efforts

• We should encourage researchers to suggest collections for digitization
What is wise?: Recommendations 3

- We should learn to understand the potential of crowd sourcing also to improve inadequate metadata!
- We should create digital environments in which crowd sourcing is possible
- Quality is in the interest of the user. Control usually is not, it is only in the interest of the institution
What are the risks?

• The ongoing digitization of catalogues and collections holds the risk that material that is not digitized will no longer be used or known, not just by researchers, but also by a younger generation of librarians

• Sustainability of our digital activities is a major, ongoing concern
What will happen? Challenges

• Audiences will expect us to digitize ever larger parts of our collections
• In larger (university and national) libraries the pressure on old-fashioned, non-digital library tasks will grow stronger. This will force us to manage the expectations of our users
What will be necessary? 1

• Co-operations between libraries, locally, nationally and internationally will become even more vital.

• We should think collectively about our digitization efforts and re-define ownership and collecting in the process.

• This is the only way toward some sort of structure.
What will be necessary? 2

- A few leading institutions will have to be guiding us in our future digitizations efforts, first and foremost: the National Library of Israel.
- NLI is willing to take on this role and has the organization and the fundraising potential to deliver.
- Jewish collections in Europe and the USA should intensify their contacts with the NLI and recognize their leading role.
What will be necessary? 3

• In Europe Judaica Europeana should be the leading organization, backed up by Rothschild Foundation Europe initiatives

• In the USA the Center for Jewish History seems the most likely leading organization, but some of the major libraries “qualify” as well (JTS, HUC, Harvard, Penn, Stanford, etc.)

• AJL should encourage coordination by these leading organizations and can play a role in mapping the initiatives
Where does DH research fit in?

• DH research will become more prominent, “moving from reading and critiquing to building and making” (Schreibman)

• Defining and performing DH research is not a primary task for Judaica libraries, with the exception of only the most prominent institutions (NLI, CJH, AJL??)

• Providing digital resources and virtual research environments is a primary task for today’s libraries and is vital for our future

• An open eye to the needs of the DH community is in the future interest of libraries
Robert Allen Zimmerman

“The times they are a-changin’”