Congratulations to the Life Membership & Fanny Goldstein Merit Award Winners

ELIZABETH F. STABLER, CHAIR, LIFE MEMBER AND FANNY GOLDSMITH AWARDS COMMITTEE

The Association of Jewish Librarians is delighted to announce the winners of the 2011 Life Membership and Fanny Goldstein Merit Awards, to be presented at the AJL Annual Convention in Montreal, Quebec, Canada this coming June.

Pearl Berger, Benjamin Gottesman Librarian and Dean of Libraries, Yeshiva University, New York, NY. is the 2011 recipient of the Association’s Life Membership Award. Life Membership is granted in recognition of outstanding leadership and professional contributions to the Association and to the profession of Jewish librarianship.

Etta D. Gold, Library Director, Temple Beth Am, Miami, Florida will receive the Fanny Goldstein Merit Award for 2011. The Fanny Goldstein Merit Award, named for the librarian, social activist and founder of National Jewish Book Month, is bestowed in recognition of loyal and ongoing contributions to the Association and to the profession of Jewish librarianship.

Announcing the 2011 Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Winner

The Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Committee is pleased to announce the winner of the 2011 Manuscript Award. The recipient of the award is Susan L. Ross Sommer for her story In Search of Lottie. This manuscript was selected by the committee on the basis of quality of writing, relevance to today’s readers, strength of plot and appeal of characters.

This part mystery, part coming-of-age story for 8 to 11 year old readers explores how children today can begin to understand the enormity of the Holocaust by discovering the life of one teenager who was caught up in its midst.

Lizzy Roth was named after her great-aunt Lottie, a teenage violin prodigy who was left behind when other family members escaped the Holocaust. Lizzy, who loves playing the violin and has a crush on the cutest cello player in the seventh grade, decides to do her school research project on her great-aunt. With humor and determination, she follows clues found in letters, scrapbooks and on the Internet to solve the mystery of Lottie’s fate: Did Lottie survive?

Susan Lotte Ross is an attorney and writer. Raised in Auburn, Maine, she is a graduate of Brown University and New York University School of Law. The daughter of a Holocaust refugee from Vienna, Ms. Ross has woven many characters and events based on her family’s history into In Search of Lottie. The novel’s upbeat focus reflects the gifts of Ms. Ross’ mother who raised her children with resilience and joy, even in the wake of loss. Ms. Ross resides in Westport, CT with her husband and three children.

Information on the RAS Awards can be found in the May/June issue of AJL Reviews
Message from the Convention Chairs

Bienvenue a tous! Welcome to Montreal! B’ruchim habaim!

AJL conventions provide members with a singular opportunity to learn and to teach about the bibliographic and archival treasures of our libraries as well as the ways in which we connect with our community. This year our presenters will be coming from all over the world to share their expertise. Our theme of ‘Cultural diversity, Cultural mosaic’ is an opportunity to introduce you to Montreal’s unique linguistic and cultural character, therefore many sessions in the convention program highlight the city’s distinctive Jewish history, organizations and collections. We encourage all of you to participate in this bibliographic ‘tour’ of our city, our province and our nation.

Please join us at the Jewish Community Center on Monday afternoon to learn more about Montreal’s Jewish community and history. Be part of the International Yiddish Theatre Festival – get a ticket for the Monday evening performance. And don’t forget to book one of the amazing Montreal tours offered on Wednesday afternoon.

We look forward to getting to know as many of you as possible at convention, so please introduce yourselves to us.

Chaya Goldman
Marsha Lustigman
Eva Raby

Convention Exhibitors
Be sure to visit these vendors’ tables

- Andornot Consulting Inc.
- Association Book Exhibit
- The Azrieli Foundation
- Bibliofiche - OPALS
- Carr McLean Limited
- Index to Jewish Periodicals
- Israel Emergency Alliance
- Jerusalem Books Ltd.
- Librairie Bonder Bookstore Inc.
- McGill-Queen’s University Press
- Posen Foundation
- ProQuest
- Scholarly Book Services Inc.
- The Scholar’s Choice
- Second Story Press
- Tundra Books
Montreal: The City Where the Sun Sets in the North-West

JANICE ROSEN, CO-PRESIDENT, AJL MONTREAL CHAPTER

We of the Montreal chapter of the Association of Jewish Libraries look forward to greeting our colleagues from the USA and beyond when you come for the Annual conference this June. Before your arrival, you might want to be aware of some of the quirks that you will encounter in our beloved city. (The following observations were compiled with inspiration from the writings of Montreal author and urban observer Josh Freed.)

GPS systems go mad in Montreal:
Due to the shape of the island, streets called East and West actually run North-East and South-West, while the dividing line between East and West streets, St. Lawrence Boulevard, actually goes from North-West to South-East, rather than running North to South, as one might assume. You can visit the lovely Eastern Townships region, actually located South-East of the city, or choose to go “up North” to the Laurentian Mountain resorts... in the North-West. We’re sure you’re getting the hang of it by now!

Underground city and outdoor life:
For Montrealers, who live surrounded by snow and ice for more than half of each year, none can resist an occasion to sit outside in the sun as soon as its remotely possible. Therefore you will see terraced restaurants spilling onto every sidewalk, filled with customers, while the cool shadowed interiors stay mostly empty. Meanwhile, underneath the streets, a warren of stores and services network vast areas of the downtown core, allowing Montrealers to spend entire winter days hidden from the elements. Good for summer mole-types as well!

Speak French to be served in English:
Those who can speak a little French will notice the delicate interplay of linguistic politics in Quebec; when an obvious English speaker makes an effort to speak French to a French-speaking salesperson or server, like as not they will receive an answer back in English, as a gesture of politeness. It doesn’t mean that your attempt at French is not appreciated!

Missing and ghost apostrophes:
After political reforms in 1976 made it mandatory for French to be the dominant language on all signage, business names which formerly had an “S”, such as Eaton’s department store and Schwartz’s Deli, were obliged to lose their possessive punctuation mark and letter “s”. Careful observation may reveal the ghostly remnants of those missing letters on the signs belonging to older buildings.

Look up to see Old English Montreal:
Old vestiges of painted signs on the upper side walls of buildings are often written in only in English.

Montreal, the City of Festivals:
You may have heard that right after our conference Montreal’s famous Jazz festival is set to begin. But did you know that in Montreal, every occasion can be turned into a festival? On restaurant banners you will see “festival de homard” (Lobster festival - not for the kosher observant!) or perhaps a “festival de fraises” (strawberries).

Here are the other Montreal festivals you can look for in June 2011:

- MUTEK electronic music and digital creativity festival, June 1-5
- Suoni per il popolo, June 6-28
- Le Mondial de la bière/Beer Festival, June 8-12
- Tour La Nuit June 3 – Tour de l’Île, June 5
- Nuit blanche sur tableau noir, June 9
- Les FrancoFolies, June 10-18
- Montreal Grand Prix, June 10-12
- International des feux Loto-Québec fireworks fest, June-July
- Infringement Festival, June 17-27
- Fête de la musique in Old Montreal, June 20-23
- Fête nationale, June 23-24 – parade and events
- Montreal Baroque, June 23-27
- Montreal International Jazz Festival, June 25-July 4

(source: http://www.montreal.com/tourism/festivals/index.htm)

We hope you are ready to have a great time in Montreal!
RAS News: See You in Montreal!
RACHEL LEKET-MOR, RAS PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues,

As the Montreal Convention Committee is wrapping up its preparations to welcome us to the 46th annual convention at the Marriott Montréal Château Champlain, I would like to help you navigate through RAS programs, in hope you are as excited as I am to attend them.

First off, I would like to encourage you to take advantage of the wealth of programs and tours dedicated to the local Jewish community, be it about particular individuals or communities, or regarding regional libraries, archives and special collections. What a wonderful opportunity to familiarize yourselves with the milieu of Canadian Jewry!

Local history and present-day venues will be peppe up with presentations given by AJL members from around the world. This time, we will welcome presenters from the Netherlands, United Kingdom, South Africa, Argentina, and Israel. Two presentations will bring us up to date with news from the National Library of Israel, while additional session will feature three presentations related to Israel Studies.

Rare books and manuscripts will be discussed in another session, while two sessions will cover Anti-Semitism and Holocaust Studies. For those of you who are interested in the performing arts, a program that includes a documentary film will be offered, as well as the optional Yiddish play, ha-Megilah by Itsik Manger.

Traditional librarianship programs are also offered this year: different aspects of metadata managing will be explored in three separate presentations, along with the annual update from Library of Congress; and a presentation about Judaica resources will offer reference foundations in Jewish Studies. However, non-mainstream publications will also be discussed – in a round table dedicated to collecting ephemera. New and exiting topics at this convention are fundraising, and copyright issues in the digital age. These indeed are issues that many of AJL members have to tackle on their daily job.

Issues related to the Digital Age will be explored in three separate sessions this year. One session will feature digitization projects in three different institutions, while another session will offer a presentation about related halakhic and ethical issues. The third program will deal with the impact of the digital world on Jewish Studies by focusing on best practices, international standards and sustainability of digital collections, as well as the implications of caring for digitally born collections. I also urge you to join the Digitization Committee meeting on Sunday afternoon, to take part in a discussion with JSTOR representative regarding new digitization initiatives.

Lastly, I would like to invite you to a special program addressing the AJL member survey conducted last year by SSC President Joyce Levine and myself. During this program (Tuesday afternoon), we will give a full report about the survey and discuss its implications regarding the future of AJL. We look forward to a lively discussion and hope to see many of you there!

Come join us in Montreal – au revoir!

Yours,
Rachel

Journalist’s Website Memorializes 150th Anniversary of U.S. Civil War
DON CANAAN, dcanaan4@gmail.com

The 150th anniversary of the U.S. Civil War (or as some southerners see it as ‘The War of Northern Aggression’) will be commemorated during 2011. Internet surfers can now experience those days of conflict and death by going to http://www.IsraeliteOnline.com.

The free website contains all weekly issues of the Cincinnati-based Israelite newspaper (July 1859-July 1867). You will be able to experience the war from the viewpoint of American Jewry.

The Israelite, which has been published continuously since 1854 (now The American Israelite), was created by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the founder of Reform Judaism in America. Some historians have reported that Wise’s personal feelings leaned toward the Confederacy.

Whatever his politics were, contemporary readers can now experience the victories and defeats of the Union and Confederate armies, the inauguration and assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, and the early days of Reconstruction.

Don Canaan, a resident of The Villages, FL, is a retired U.S. Army photographer and prize-winning TV and newspaper journalist and editor. For a time, he reported for the American Israelite, receiving a First Place Award for his series “Jews in Ohio’s Prisons.” Canaan is also the editor of http://www.IsraelFaxx.com, a website containing news, features, commentaries on contemporary Israel.
Chapter Chatter
TOBY ROSSNER

Chapter Relations Committee
An important message from the Chapter relations committee:
The convention in Montreal gives all the attendees an opportunity to discover the wonderful activities occurring in chapters. The meeting is open to anyone who is interested in joining or in creating a chapter. Please meet the current Chapter Relation’s Committee representative on Sunday, June 19, at 8:30pm in Salon 401. Chapter representatives, please do your best to attend this important meeting. For more information please contact Judy Greenblatt at JudyGreenB@AOL.com or Amalia Warshenbrot at AmaliaIma@ATT.net. Phone # 704-365-3313.

AJL Southern California (AJLSC)
Submitted by Enid Sperber
It was a dark and stormy night...yes we do occasionally have real weather in Los Angeles. Our March meeting was held at the Stephen S. Wise Temple Library. Amid sounds of large metal objects being thrown around the mountaintop on which Stephen Wise is built and our host Roberta Lloyd stuffing paper in rattling windows, we began our preliminary discussion about the AJL Los Angeles Convention 2012. We chose the slogan Spotlight on AJL: Walk the Red Carpet to Convention 2012 as our advertising theme. Los Angeles has so many wonderful opportunities and we entertained so many stimulating ideas that deciding which to offer you will be our challenge. We are the “Film Capital of the World” and we are home to the Margaret Herrick Library of the Academy of Motion Pictures. We have world-class museums like the Getty and the Museum of Tolerance. Our AJLSC member Adaire Klein, head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center-Museum Of Tolerance Library & Archives, offered to adapt a program she created on the issue of sensitive materials in a library. Our local journey through Jewish Genealogy in February, with the guidance of Barbara Algaze and the Family History Library, was so exhilarating that we considered using this program as the core of a CEU course. We talked copyright, and in particular VHS transfer, and noted that we have one of the foremost legal minds on the subject right here in Los Angeles. And do we have a hotel for you! The Hyatt Century Plaza Hotel was completed in 1966 on land formerly belonging to the back-lot of Twentieth Century Fox. Its address on Avenue of the Stars quickly became a magnet to the new community of Century City where the ocean breeze swept the city. The broad streets and the feel of open space remain today. The nineteen-story hotel, known for many years as the Western White House, has hosted its share of high profile guests. Today it remains a popular venue for star-studded gala events. The pool and gardens are everything you can expect from a Southern California vacation spot. We promise sun and ocean breeze, with no dark and stormy nights! Who knows - you might even see a star walking on the Avenue. The Los Angeles Convention 2012 will be held on June 17 – 20, 2012. Mark your calendars NOW!

The Southeast Chapter of AJL
Submitted by Amalia Warshenbrot
The weather in the last week of March was rainy. Temperatures dropped to 40 degrees and it felt like winter, but on April 3rd the Carolina blue sky and the rise of the temperature gave the sense of a new beginning. It was tempting to stay outdoors, but instead, a few local librarians met in the beautiful new Satisky building in Beth Meyer Synagogue in Raleigh to network, share our expertise with one another, and, of course, nosh.

Rita Gerber, Beth Myer Synagogue librarian, welcomed me outside when I arrived after four hours on the road. I set the meeting in Raleigh because there are about a dozen librarians within an accessible geographic area. The majority of libraries in this region are in synagogues with small congregations of 100 to 300 members in small communities far apart from one another. A few are run by volunteers with no budget. I hope that when the Southeast chapter is established these volunteers will become our “cyberspace” members.

A fascinating lecture by Dr. Marc Bregman, Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, opened the meeting. We learned about Mishnaic texts that were written on the same type parchments that were used by scribes to write the Torah.

After the lecture Rita hosted us in the synagogue library. I take this opportunity to thank Rita for her hospitality and commend her on the excellent volunteer work in the synagogue library.
Meeting with the librarians made me feel as if I were a salesperson. I wanted to promote AJL and its services to each one of them. Whether AJL members or not, some librarians were not aware of AJL services such as: the mentoring committee, the Jewish Values Finder, library accreditation, or the bibliography bank. One was not subscribed to Hasafran and was not aware of the benefits of using the Sydney Taylor award lists, the AJL podcasts, or our Facebook page, to name a few.

The next day I received the following email from a local day-school media center specialist:

“Thank you for planning yesterday’s meeting. I really enjoyed the speaker and meeting another school librarian. Thanks to you I have a list of projects - such as get more information about AJL accreditation, check out the recommended books, etc.”

The chapter’s goal is to provide peer support to librarians in libraries that serve synagogues, day schools, and community centers in the Southeast region as well as to librarians in academic libraries. It is also an opportunity to involve students in library and information graduate schools, committee or board members, and volunteers. I plan to arrange another meeting after the High Holidays. Librarians with similar needs will share ideas for fundraising, collection development, programming, as well as professional development.

The Atlanta chapter is our role model. Their next meeting will take place on May 5th.

For more information on the Southeast Chapter please contact Amalia Warshenbrot Southeast Regional Chapters Representative, AmaliaIma@ATT.net; 704-365-3313.

The Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago (JLN)
Submitted by Daniel Stuhlman, Vice President for Publicity

On January 23, 2011 the Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago (JLN) met at North Suburban Beth El in Highland Park to hear Joy Kingsolver discuss the place of archives in schools. She gave us guidelines for collecting, organizing, and preservation of materials.

Joy has been an archivist in Chicago for more than fifteen years. Currently she is the archivist for the Shel Silverstein Collection and for Chicago Sinai Congregation. She has made frequent presentations and has taught CEU courses at AJL conventions.

Our March 6 meeting celebrated Jewish children’s literature at The Book Market, an independent bookstore in Glenview. Two Chicago area authors and one illustrator, all 2011 Sydney Taylor Book Award Winners, gave short presentations about their works: Kristina Swarner, winner of a 2011 Sydney Taylor Gold and Silver medal for her illustrations in Gathering Sparks by Howard Schwartz and Modeh Ani by Sarah Gershman; Fern Schumer Chapman, author of Is it Night or Day?, a Notable Book for older readers; and Jenny Meyerhoff, author of Queen of Secrets, a Notable Book for Teens.

Members of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, Debbie Colodny (Sefer So Good and Cook Memorial Public Library), Debbie Feder (Ida Crown Jewish Academy), Rita Soltan (Oakland Community College, Bloomfield, MI), and Rachel Kamin (North Suburban Synagogue Beth El) reviewed some of the books that the Committee read this year and highlighted some titles to watch for in 2011. We feel very fortunate to have so much local talent here in Chicago, and we are very proud of how well our chapter is represented on the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee. It was a wonderful afternoon!

Thanks to Rachel Kamin for her work in arranging both events. We learned new things and had two most enjoyable afternoons.


Capital Area Chapter (AJL-CAC)
Submitted by Naomi Morse

Trailblazing Jewish Children’s Book Publishers, Kar-Ben’s Judye Groner and Madeline Wikler were guests of Congregation Beth El on January 30. The members of AJL-CAC were graciously invited to this special morning. The Kar-Ben founders and editorial directors provided a behind-the-scenes look at the business of creating and publishing Jewish children’s books.

Editor’s Note: Judy and Madeline were awarded the 2002 Sydney Taylor Body-of-Work Award at the
AJL Convention in Denver.

Editor’s Note: The Capital Area Chapter is pleased that it was able to support three members with $200 stipends for the upcoming AJL Annual Conference.

South Florida Chapter (SFAJL)
From the Minutes of the December, 2011 Chapter Event

Once again SFAJL sponsored the opening event of Florida Atlantic University’s Jewish Kultur Festival on March 5. The event, geared towards children and families, is called Klez4Kids. SFAJL’s own Heidi Estrin was guest storyteller, performing The Wedding That Saved a Town by Yale Strom with live backup from members of the Klezmer Company Orchestra.

Long Island Chapter (AJL-LI)
Submitted by Wendy A. Marx, Chapter President

AJL-LI held our Annual Public Librarians meeting on April 7 at the Commack Public Library. Our members reviewed recently published books of general content of Jewish content that may not have appeared in the public library review journals. This is our way to get our name out to the public. When I meet other librarians or Jewish educators and share that I am President of our LI-AJL, they have no idea that such a group exists. As I learn of many local synagogues and local Hadassah chapters that have merged, I am determined, in my role as AJL-LI President to keep our chapter viable. Happily, we remain both viable and vital.

We have a new member, author and illustrator Ann D. Koffsky, whose new book, Noah’s Swim A-Thon, has already been published by URJ Press. Her joyful text and bright illustrations teach young children about the values of tzedakah and perseverance while sharing the magic of Jewish summer camp. Noah’s Swim-a-Thon (for ages 4-9) is sure to be a hit with both campers and their parents.

I look forward to seeing you all in Montreal.

From the AJL-LI Newsletter Sifria, March, 2011:

The Long Island Chapter has established an annual Karen L. Cooper Scholarship Award, granting a $500 scholarship to a graduate student planning a career in Judaic Librarianship.

Editor’s note: Kol HaKavod. This is the perfect project for chapters that will ensure that the profession of Judaica Librarianship will continue to grow.

Florida West Coast Chapter

Our members keep multiplying, with more librarians joining from north and south of Sarasota. Florida West Coast Chapter met on April 3 in Temple Beth Sholom where Heather Miller is the librarian for the day school, the Goldie Feldman Academy, and Sylvia Firschein is the librarian for the adults. When we meet we bring our own lunch; the hosts provide dessert and drinks. Author Penny Abrams, An Other Life, was our speaker. Her book tells the story of a widow and a widower and the difficulty we have to finish our grief in bereavement. We are fortunate to have many authors here in Sarasota.

San Antonio Chapter
Submitted by Marlene Reynolds, coordinator

The San Antonio Chapter of AJL will car pool to the University of Texas in Austin on May 27 to visit the Judaica/Hebraica collections of the Harry Ransom Center, their Guttenberg Bible, and the world’s first permanent photograph. See more at: http://www.hrc.utexas.edu/collections/guide/jewish/ There will be a short presentation by the head curator and then a tour in the building plus free time to wander around the exhibitions floor. News & Reviews Editor Uri Kolodney is making the arrangements for the group. Thank you, Uri.

New York Metropolitan Area (AJL-NYMA)
Submitted by Leslie Monchar, Shimon Vogel, and Hallie Cantor; edited by Rita Lifton.

NYMA’s 2011 Reference Workshop, organized by Ina Rubin Cohen and Rachail Kurtz, was held on January 18th at the main branch of the New York Public Library. Presenters included Dr. David Walczyk, Assistant Professor of Information & Library Science, Pratt Institute; Michelle Chesner, Librarian for Jewish Studies, Columbia University; and Jim Rosenbloom, Brandeis University Judaica Librarian and AJL President.

Both influenced and inspired by Marshall McLuhan, Dr. Walczyk spoke about Evaluating the Usability of Digital Information. He challenged his audience to think about how people adapt to the new ways in which information is presented, explaining “when media change, people change.” He divided his talk into four sections: the current situation; myths of information; precepts/perceptions of information; and methods/tools of usability. Considering the librarian’s role in the 21st century, Dr. Walczyk advised, “be a verb, not a noun.”

In Staying on the Cutting Edge: Jewish Studies
Research in a Digital World, Michelle Chesner discussed the wide range of sites for digital research in the field of Jewish studies. The significance of these sites is the increased availability to researchers of texts and documents that, in the past, were in locations too remote to visit firsthand. Additionally, the availability of digitized records allows researchers to view multiple versions of texts and documents. Among the websites discussed by Ms. Chesner - Israel National Library, Friedberg Genizah Project, and YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe, to name just a few.

Jim Rosenbloom updated the group on Future Developments in AJL, describing webinars and podcasts that are being planned. He also mentioned an AJL task force that is working on developing a certificate program in Judaica librarianship that would be administered by universities and library schools across the country.

The workshop concluded with a tour of NYPL’s blockbuster exhibit “Three Faiths: Judaism, Christianity, Islam” led by co-curator, David Wachtel. The exhibit consisted of texts tracing and displaying the history, development and similarities shared by the three Abrahamic religions, all from the extraordinary collection of NYPL. Mr. Wachtel was a superb tour guide, conveying his deep knowledge of the material as well as his excitement in working with these rare books and manuscripts.

NYMA’s 2011 Cataloging Workshop was held on February 9 at Temple Emanu-El. Sara Spiegel served as guest coordinator with logistical support provided by Rita Lifton. The cutting edge program began with a presentation by Dr. Joan Biella, Senior Bibliographic Specialist and Acting Section Head, Israel/Judaica Cataloging Section, Library of Congress. Dr. Biella’s topic was RDA and the RDA Test: Hebraica Perspectives. Implementation of RDA (Resource Description and Access), the new cataloging standard currently in the testing stage, is the single most hot button issue in the world of cataloging. Using Sefer Mekor ha-Hayim by Hayim Krokhmal, a book of commentaries on the Scroll of Ruth as her sample, Dr. Biella demonstrated how this work would be cataloged under RDA vs. how it was cataloged under the current standard, AACR2. Dr. Biella’s very clear and precise lesson on applying the rules of RDA was very instructive. In addition, her description of the learning curve for catalogers, which she recently experienced as Library of Congress is a testing site for RDA, was very helpful.

The second half of the workshop dealt with another important issue in the cataloging world, the use of genre/form headings. Cameron J. Campbell, Director of Indexes, and Erica Treesh, Database Manager for Authority Control, American Theological Library Association (ATLA), Chicago, described the Religion Genre/Form Revision Project, a Library of Congress project in which ATLA is participating. Yael Mandelstam, Head of Cataloging, Fordham Law Library, followed with A Brief Update on the Law/Genre Project. As these presenters explained, traditional subject headings describe what a work is “about” while genre/form terms tell you what a work “is.” Both the religion genre project and the law genre project have approached AJL members for input about genre terms relating to Judaism and Jewish law.

These two excellent sessions were followed by a tour of the glorious sanctuary of Temple Emanu-El led by Mark Heutlinger, Temple Administrator.

Being Smart with Smart Boards: a New Tool for School Librarians was the theme of the March 9th School Library Workshop, organized by Rachel Glasser and Leah Moskovits, at Ramaz Middle School. Leslie Monchar, Librarian at the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy and Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School, Livingston, NJ, explained that while she does not have a smart board in the library, she invites herself to classrooms to introduce library resources and online databases as students begin a new project. In this way, the smart board is used as a computer with a projector; the advantage is that both Ms. Monchar and the students can touch the screen rather than use a mouse. Sample searches are done before the entire group, a traditional pathfinder supplementing the presentation. In addition, because most of the classrooms have smart boards, Ms. Monchar forwards relevant websites to teachers.

Esther Schnaidman, Librarian/Media Specialist (Elementary Grades) at the Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey, River Edge, NJ, demonstrated how she uses the smart board in teaching lessons in library skills. Having completed a course on Smart notebook software, she has created lesson plans. She also uses (and adapts) lesson plan templates and finds ideas on lesson plan sharing sites such as Smart Exchange (http://exchange.smarttech.com) and Legacy Heritage for Judaic Studies lessons (http://legacyheritage.org/SJED/). Ms. Schnaidman demonstrated several types of activities that she
uses to teach her students – book hunts, matching games, and concentration exercises.

Rabbi Tzvi Pittinsky, Director of Educational Technology (High School), The Frisch School, Paramus, NJ, and a Tanakh teacher, is a smart board certified teacher-trainer. Rabbi Pittinsky’s objectives were to teach the attendees smart board skills and applications, and to discover resources to help create Smart notebook lessons. He used a Tanakh lesson as his sample, demonstrating how to highlight and manipulate text; how to incorporate photographs into the lesson, bringing specific areas into focus with a magic pen tool; and how to use interactive maps, one source being Google Earth. You can follow his blog at http://techrav.blogspot.com/ or on Twitter:@techrav.

This exciting and educational workshop certainly accomplished the organizers’ goals of increasing school librarians’ awareness and understanding of the latest technology being used in classrooms.

NYMA’s signoff event for this academic year will be its spring conference on May 17th at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, NYC. The overall topic will be genealogy. The program will include a tribute to retiring librarians Aviva Astrinsky, YIVO Institute of Jewish Research, and Phil Miller, HUC-JIR.

Greater Cleveland Chapter
Submitted by Andrea Davidson

Sean Martin continues as the Greater Cleveland Chapter President. New Steering Committee members have been elected: Gerry Powers, Vice President; Heather Lenson, Treasurer. Ilka Gordon. The March meeting was held at The Temple-Tifereth Israel. Linda Silver spoke about writing her new book, Best Jewish Books for Children and Teens: a JPS Guide, and discussed how the book’s organization by reading level, subject, author, title, illustrator, and Sydney Taylor and National Jewish Book award winners provides ways in which it can be used by librarians, teachers and parents. She pointed out some of what she considers the best of Jewish children’s books (such as Something for Nothing by Phoebe Gilman) and some of the titles that she did not include (such as the 2010 Sydney Taylor Book Award winner, The Importance of Wings.)

Our May meeting will be held at Fairmount Temple. Aimee Lurie will regale us with her experiences as a member of the Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee, discuss books that she and the other committee members have debated, and outline what comprises a winning title. Chapter members are working on compiling our spring booklists of recommended new books of Jewish content for children and teens and for adults that will, once again, be printed in electronic format.

Judaica Librarians Group (Israel)
Submitted by Yaakov Aronson

On 22 March the Israel Judaica Librarians’ Group held its second study day of 5771 at the National Library of Israel (NLI). The program was devoted to book collectors and book collections with an introductory presentation by Professor Hagai Ben-Shami, Academic Director of NLI and its Collections Branch. Professor Ben-Shami outlined the fields on which NLI concentrates in its collection building: Judaism, Eretz Yisrael, and Islam as related to the Middle East and pointed out that acquisitions also include general material as it relates to the main fields of interest to NLI, for example, material on the Crusades.

Zion Shorer, retired Director of Hebrew Cataloging at NLI, talked primarily about his collection of material relating to Birkat haHama (the blessing recited when the sun renews its cycle every 28 years). His decision to collect this material was a very practical one: it is not very expensive and doesn’t require a lot of storage space. This was true until the beginning of the new cycle in 5741 (1981). The number of items published that year far surpassed anything previously seen, not only in number but in length. And the material published before the cycle that began in 5769 (2009) was greater still. So his modest collection seems to have gotten out of hand. And Zion in an aside said that he is fearful about the amount of material that will appear the next time around in 5797 (2037).

Ms. Ayelet Rubin, in charge of the map collection at NLI, outlined the life of Mr. Eran Laor, upon whose collection NLI’s map collection is based. Mr Laor was an ardent collector of ancient maps of Eretz Yisrael, co-author of a comprehensive study of the maps of Eretz Yisrael, and was considered one of the founders of cartography in Israel. A visit to the map collection to see selected items followed her talk.

The final lecture was delivered by Mr. Bill Gross, who has assembled a large collection of Hebrew books and ceremonial items (tashmishe kedusha). An important point he stressed was that when cataloging a book the descriptor “illustrated” might appear, but nothing is said about the types of illustrations. Many times these present important cultural and
historical information not readily apparent in the text and a change in cataloging practice could be of great benefit to researchers.

Issue #9 of the Alon of the Judaica Librarians’ Group (Israel) was published online on March 3, 2011 (http://tinyurl.com/4xtdf5o). This issue focuses on Book Collectors and Rare Book Dealers. Elyasaf Robinson, a third generation book dealer, discusses the collection of materials relating to the history of Tel Aviv started by his grandfather, also named Elyasaf. The collection is now in the Stanford University Library.

Nili Ben Ari, granddaughter of the book dealer Lipa Schwager, writes about the impression made on her Grandfather by visits to Yemen in the 1920’s. Reuben Gafni describes the famous Jerusalem book store Bamberger and Wahrmann. Mr. Gafni leads tours in Jerusalem organized around books, libraries and used book stores.

Issue #10 appeared on April 4, 2011 (http://tinyurl.com/3rw6fc). It focuses on the impact of the widespread distribution of books in the past and present. Ya’akov Rosnes, founder of the Internet site http://www.virtualgeula.com, wrote about Flooding the Market With Privately Published Books and proposed questions every new author should ask himself.

Professor Shmuel Feiner of Bar Ilan’s Department of Jewish History, discussed The Distribution of Letters and Periodicals to the General Public by Enlightenment Authors in Order to Bypass the Rabbinic Establishment.

On the subject of interaction between Rabbis and authors, two letters from Rabbi Zvi Yehudah Kook to the authors Chaim Nachman Bialik and Alexander Ziskind Rabinowitz are presented.

New England Chapter (NEAJL)
Submitted by Ann Abrams

The New England Chapter will hold their annual meeting on May 20 at Gann Academy, Waltham, MA. AJL National President Jim Rosenbloom will greet the members, along with Ann Abrams, NEAJL President and Julie Levine, Gann Academy Librarian.

The program will feature Gil Rosen, Temple Emanuel, Newton and Ann Abrams, Temple Israel, Boston, who will review new books for adults and Sydney Taylor Award and Honor Books, followed by a tour of the Gann Library and an idea-sharing session focusing on programs presented at synagogue and school libraries and criterion for weeding little-circulated material.

ACROSS THE POND
A Visit to Britain’s Hebraica & Judaica Libraries
Stephanie (Sara Leah) Gross, Chair AJL Mentoring. March 2011.

Milena Zeidler, Oxford Center (Yarnton) and Rahel Fronda (Bodleian) at Caffè Nero in Blackwell’s Bookshop, Oxford.

I had purchased tickets for a long-awaited trip to London, UK, where I would celebrate both Purim and a fast-approaching landmark birthday. It was also a chance to reconnect to friends from my days in Israel, three of whom had married Brits and relocated to the Jewish metropolis of London. However, this trip was going to be special, and I wanted to make it even more so by doing some outreach on behalf of AJL.

I posted a notice of my upcoming trip on Hasafran, as well as on my Twitter page, to see if there were any British librarians who might wish to meet and network. My first response came from Mrs. Ilana Tahan, convenor of the HLG Hebraica Librarians Group. Ilana, who works at the British Library as Hebraica Curator and Head, Hebrew Collections and holds degrees from both Israel and England, was awarded in 2009 an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) in recognition for her scholarship (see Notes 1 and 2). Ilana Tahan informed me that HLG had approximately 20 members, all from within the United Kingdom, whom she would invite to meet with us. We settled on a date, Monday, 21st March, at the British Library, 11 a.m., with whoever could make it.
In the Spirit

I landed in England the evening of March 16. Purim and all its festivities preceded our meeting: the British love “fancy dress” and did the holiday great justice. By the time Monday, Shushan Purim, arrived, I was very much in the spirit to meet new acquaintances and forge new relationships.

Given the little amount of time in advance to prepare this conference, only four librarians were able to attend: Ilana; Ulrike Koch (another BL librarian); Vanessa Freedman, Hebrew & Jewish Studies Librarian at UCL (University College London); and myself. We sat at a table in the staff cafeteria for almost two hours and got to know one another.

Ilana explained that many British libraries have their own in-house cataloging systems, especially since their work greatly entails original fragments, manuscripts and rare books (see note 3). Some of the projects are funded by the Rothschild Foundation; another such undertaking is the Friedberg Genizah Project, and a third the George Blumenthal Genizah Project.

At this initial meeting we discussed the criteria used by British Judaica librarians for affiliating with other library associations. When, to my surprise, I found that some members were new to modern concepts of social media and networking, I proposed exploration of such emerging technologies to gain both visibility and support for future collaborative projects.

Another challenge facing their small group was the cost of attending annual conferences. I tried to assure them that most AJL members have similar problems and that they often attend rota, using whatever travel stipends are available. On the subject of fundraising for conference attendance, I recommended presenting the numerous benefits of AJL affiliation and conference participation to their underwriters. Moreover, I outlined AJL’s intentions to follow in the footsteps of other international organizations in presenting webinars and online conference vignettes. Members living at a distance from the U.S. would thus be enabled (and encouraged) to participate more fully and contribute to the association’s array of activities.

True Bond

Regarding the upcoming conference in Montreal, at least one librarian, Vanessa Freedman of UCL, has already submitted a proposal to give a talk on classification schemes in Judaica. She herself has travelled to the States and met Heidi Lerner, and hopes to co-present with her (funding-provided). In a recent email to me, Vanessa had this to say about collaboration with library colleagues, “I’ve always found individual librarians, both in the US and UK, very supportive and helpful. In particular, I’ve found Hasafran a very useful forum if I have any queries about cataloguing, etc.”

I truly enjoyed this unique opportunity to have lunch with her after our morning meeting and truly bond. Vanessa and I walked over to her campus where she generously gave me a private tour of the historic grounds, as well as the Hebraica department. If you plan to be in London for any reason, please check with the HLG to see who might be available to meet with you and give a behind-the-scenes view of their facility.


Strength in Numbers

The second leg of my outreach efforts took place at Oxford University. My primary contact was Rahel Fronda, subject specialist in the Hebrew and Jewish collections of the Bodleian Libraries there in Oxford. Rahel, herself a doctoral student of Jewish Art, met me at the Oxford train station and took me around before our scheduled meeting. We walked through the Duke Humphreys Library (exquisite!), as well as two exhibits, one on Shelley and the other about , “Cultural Revolution in Berlin: Jews in the Age of Enlightenment.” At noon we were met off-site by two other subject specialists from the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Yarnton: Dr. César Merchán-Hamann and Milena Zeidler (Library Assistant at the Leopold Muller Memorial Library). Since Rahel’s office was under construction, we opted for lunch at Café Nero in Blackwell’s Bookshop.

We grabbed a few chairs around a coffee table and shared thoughts on AJL, HLG, and what our British cousins hoped to gain from membership. Rahel considered the networking and crowd-sourcing opportunities, especially as a student on a tight budget, quite cost-effective. She recently informed
me via email that she would very much like to collaborate with other AJL members and institution members in the future. César and Milena, already institutional members, needed only to contact Yossi Galron and regain access to the membership directory due to a technical glitch. Unfortunately, there was not sufficient wi-fi access to view the current AJL website on Rahel’s smartphone (apparently a problem in England). However, my hosts simply wanted clarification on levels of membership and benefits included. I happily explained whatever I could, but was disappointed to hear that none of the three at Oxford felt they could attend in 2011 due to the demands they would have on campus.

All in all, however, they seemed quite happy to have met me in person, and I believe that my visit was a success. While kidding them with a quip, “The ‘A’ in AJL does not stand for ‘American’”, I emphasized that AJL is definitely an international organization and that it would be all the richer for their membership and participation in it. Furthermore, I stressed that strength in numbers could potentially benefit the pressing issues of funding and advocacy in libraries — for example, the proposed cuts to IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Services) which were averted due to the hue and cry from library associations. On a positive note, the 21st century has heralded emerging trends in librarianship, notably an abundance of joint digitization projects. Libraries and their specialists now find it quite advantageous to know one another personally in order to better communicate, share ideas, and optimize the collaboration process.

I departed Oxford wishing that I had another week at least to devote to this historic university town. At least I could be consoled that I would continue to meet other British librarians.

Fond Farewell

That very evening, I attended a special interest group meeting of CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) at the Guildhall Branch of the Business Library. The guest speaker, Susie Kay, was delighted to hear about AJL and asked for my card. She herself had just written a book on professionalism and offered to present at AJL conferences should we be able to bring her over. (Please visit her homepage: The Professionalism Group).

My final meeting occurred the following day with Frances Wood, bookseller at Hatchard’s (Piccadilly; founded 1797), whose cousin and I are great friends from The New York Library Club. Over tea at Fortnum & Mason’s next door, Frances regaled me with anecdotes about the book trade, recent offers for tomes on the upcoming Royal wedding, and her experiences as an ILS graduate in Britain and New York. She told me that the late Princess Margaret loved Hatchard’s and visited there often. How the Brits do love their books!

Of course, I always enjoy visiting the British Library and the myriads of bookshops throughout the city. But this trip will indeed stand out for the effort I made to acquaint myself behind the scenes with professional librarians and their personal commentaries.

I would urge my colleagues to follow suit. No Facebook or blog can ever take the place of face-to-face friendship, cross-pollination and communication. Cheers!

Dr. César Merchán-Hamann, Oxford Center, Hebrew & Jewish Studies.

1. See: “Birthday Honours for Top Activists,” by Marcus Dysch and Sasha Brenner, Jewish Chronicle, June 18, 2009. “Ilana [Antoinette] Tahan, head of the British Library’s Hebrew collections, is an OBE for contributions to scholarship. She said it was important to bring the library’s significant collection of Judaic manuscripts to a general audience.”

2. Added description: “Ilana Tahan, M.Phil. OBE, was educated at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel, and at the University of Aston in Birmingham, UK. Ilana has been Hebraica Curator at the British Library since 1989 and Head of the Hebrew Section since 2003. As Head of the Hebrew Section she manages a collection comprising over 3000 Hebrew manuscripts, some 10,000 Genizah fragments and around 70,000 printed books.” Tahan, Ilana. “Judeo Spanish Manuscripts I the British Library’s Hebrew Collection.” European Judaism 43.2. Autumn 2010: 134-152. DOI: 10.3167/ej.2010.430213.

3. These different systems came into being before the days of systematization. For a long time no need was seen to fit in with any other system. When need did arise, it was too expensive (Dr. Richard White, Yeshiva University). Rahel Fronda, from the Bodleian, adds, “As to retrospective conversion, this is still an issue partly because of items that only have a minimum level record and partly because a lot of books were never cataloged (not enough subject specialists to do it). It is, however slightly easier with books as records could be downloaded from external databases, whereas manuscript material needs to be catalogued from new. If there were (more) funding available, the Bodleian Library would be very interested in making its Hebrew manuscripts catalogues available online” (email communication, April 11, 2011).

The author thanks AJL-NYMA newsletter editor, Hallie Cantor, for her helpful input, as well as Dr. Richard White, Professor of Semitic Languages, Literature & Culture at Yeshiva University in New York.