My new book *Portraits in Literature: The Jews of Poland: An Anthology* (Valentine Mitchell, London; Portland, OR, 2011) is the saga of Jewish life in Poland and a Finalist in the National Jewish Book Awards. I have been asked: Why is the preservation of Polish Jewry’s literature important?

Before their almost total annihilation by the Germans during World War II Poland was the world center of Jewish life and culture. Through the one thousand years of their life in Poland the Jews have turned their ancient Judaic ideas and values into a complete, complex and vibrant way of life, an expression of their deeply felt beliefs and obligations to themselves and the world around them. This entire civilization has almost been erased from the face of the earth. Even though they are no longer with us, their ideas and values have been preserved in their literature, much of it translated from the Yiddish.

Literature has no survival value, but it allows the reader to see a deeper truth, seldom revealed in facts and statistics. It reflects their joys and sorrows, fears and hopes, struggles within the Jewish community and their relationships with neighbors. This literature, deals with love, hate, jealousy, corruption, including their own, poverty, and war, good and evil. Its protagonists are frequently rabbis, students, teachers, shopkeepers, innkeepers, tailors, shoemakers and beggars, common in their communities. It reflects their material poverty, respect for and insistence on education, their feelings of binding responsibilities for each other and their obligations to improve the world, their deep religiosity and eternal belief in the possibility of change and a better tomorrow. Sometimes in the form of humorous, biting satire on their own behavior, it is a true and revealing mirror of life. It is their legacy to us.

This cultural heritage, based on Judaic ideas and values survived in our hearts, influenced and determined Jewish world view and life today, gave birth to Christianity and formed the basis of Western civilization. It deserves to be preserved, studied and remembered.

Every culture deserves to be remembered and learned from. The Jews, in spite of their contributions have been one of the most maligned people on earth. Following the Holocaust, preserving Polish Jewry’s literature may even serve as a form of resistance.

Jewish culture and literature did not disappear from the face of the earth. It survived in new centers of Jewish life, such as Israel and the United States, changing its themes, protagonists, and even languages.

The literature of the Jews of Poland reflects the culture that was and is no more. I hope it may allow a new generation of readers to know more, understand Jewish life, hopes, aspirations, and to see the Jew through a different lens.

[Editor’s note: this title was reviewed in the February/March 2012 issue of AJL Reviews.]
Editor's Message

Dear Readers,

It is again that time of the year when many of us are getting ready to travel to convention. Please make sure to read the convention related articles by the co-chairs and the RAS and SSC division presidents. Also in this issue, an enlarged, elaborated report of three events of NYMA, the AJL chapter of New York Metropolitan Area. For the Texans among us, please read the message from the Chapter relations chair, Amalia Warshenbrot regarding the Houston 2013 convention.

I wish you all a relaxing (yet fruitful!) summer and hope to see many of you next month in Pasadena!

As always, please don’t hesitate to email me with any concerns or suggestions.

With best wishes,
Uri Kolodney, Editor-in-chief.

Prepare another for a livelihood…

Our Talmud in the Tractate Kiddushin tells us that a father is obligated to teach his son a trade. It is incumbent upon each of us to help prepare a student for a profession and, at the same time, promote Judaica librarianship. We can do this by supporting our scholarship awards. **Our donations are down, and any amount is appreciated.**

The AJL Scholarship Fund awards two scholarships of $1000.00 each year to talented library science students who show an interest in pursuing a career in Judaica librarianship. For each gift, an acknowledgment card is sent to the appropriate person. It is a very meaningful way to recognize simchas, send donations in memory of a deceased, or make a donation for a speedy recovery. Send your contributions with the appropriate information. Please remember to include the address of the family of those honored or remembered in order that we can notify the appropriate individuals.

Please complete the form below and send it, along with your donation, to: Sarah M. Barnard, Serials Librarian, Hebrew Union College-Klau Library, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220.

A thank you goes to each and every donor!!

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A thank you goes to each and every donor!!
AJL Annual Convention Meets in Pasadena, Crown of the Valley

RACHEL LEKET-MOR, RAS PRESIDENT

Dear colleagues,

The 47th annual convention of AJL promises to be as nifty and energizing as the metropolitan area of Los Angeles that hosts us. I look forward to our shared learning experiences while enjoying good company at the luxurious Langham Huntington Hotel in Pasadena.

AJL’s Southern California chapter led by Co-Chairs Sharon Benamou and Enid Sperber has put together a wonderful convention program with enticing activities, ranging from exceptional tours in local attractions to sharing local histories and special guest presentations from around the world. These delightful programs will culminate in a special presentation arranged by our ALA liaison Elliot Gertel and SSC Vice-President Sara Ravid, featuring ALA President Molly Raphael.

The RAS Program offers this year a wealth of selections, representing all three institutional categories constituting our Division: Research Libraries, Archives, and Special Collections. The following paragraphs give you a taste of what the convention entails. Sessions featuring gems from Yeshiva and Columbia Universities’ Special Collections, as well as archival collections and best practices for archivists will be offered alongside other sessions celebrating Jewish literacy in AJL research libraries. How to curate noteworthy exhibits in a research library based on existing collections? This topic will be discussed and demonstrated in one of these sessions (The Creative Exhibitor Inside You: Developing Exhibits in Research Libraries and Museums). What defines a Jewish library? How are Jewish collections perceived in different historical and geo-political contexts? These questions will be explored in another session (It Ain’t Necessarily So: Collecting Jewish Publications, Sustaining Jewish Libraries).

Jewish literacy will be celebrated by considering the boundaries of the Jewish canon as represented in the Posen Library of Jewish Civilization and Culture, by looking into adaptations of a biblical story in Iranian and Judeo-Persian literature (Nahid Pirnazar, University of California in Los Angeles), or by learning about exciting new digitization initiatives (From There to Here, from Here to There, Digitization Initiatives are Everywhere). Women creative writing will be discussed in another session (Jody Myers, California State University, Northridge).

The Arts will be explored through visual representations of the written word in Jewish history and through Jewish music and its presence in the American scene. The Librarian Code of Ethics and Jewish laws concerning books will be featured in two different presentations (Guila Cooper: Revisionism and Professional Ethics; Zachary L. Grayson: The Law of the Book).

Another focus this year is the vibrant Israeli community in Los Angeles, which is probably the largest and best organized outside of Israel. Hebrew E-books and their integration in research libraries will be explored as well (E-Book Models in Academic Libraries: Prospects from Israel and the United States), together with recent news from the revitalized National Library of Israel and from the Library of Congress’s Israel and Judaica Section.

Last but not least: in celebration of AJL’s Judaica Bibliography Award winner, Bibliographia Karaitica, we have invited the Karaite Jews of America to share with us their knowledge of Karaite textual traditions. This presentation, delivered by Shawn Lichaa and Joe Pesah, will be moderated by Barry Walfish, author Bibliographia Karaitica.

Come join us at AJL Annual Convention!

Yours, Rachel

JOYCE LEVINE, SSC PRESIDENT

The convention committee has been busily planning a wonderful program for us. Among the sessions of interest targeted to SSC librarians will be a panel on e-books, various presentations on adult and children's literature, historical fiction, web tools and cataloging tips for school and synagogue librarians, and of course the famous Sydney Taylor tell-all reviews. There will be two separate roundtable discussions, one for school librarians and the other for synagogue and center librarians. These discussions provide valuable information and networking opportunities, especially for those of us who work in the relative isolation of small libraries. Sessions of general interest will include a panel Jews and comics, musical theater, Chassidism in Israel, the history and culture of Jews in Poland, Lithuania, and the Far East, Jewish genealogy, Jews in the Civil War, and many other topics. There will also be exciting tours of the LA area. I hope to see you in Pasadena next month!

[Editor’s note: this is an updated version of content which was previously published in the Feb/March 2012 issue].
Join us at the Langham Huntington Hotel for an Elegant and Invigorating Retreat in June.

**Program**

The program committee (Sharon Benamou, Charna Gross, Rachel Leket-Mor, Joyce Levin, Enid Kent Sperber) along with gracious colleagues have been hard at work to create an exciting range of sessions to tempt your curiosity and intellect. The opening plenary features Reuven Firestone speaking on Peoples of the Books: Jews in the Qur’an and the Qur’an to the Jews. Mr. Firestone is a rabbi, professor and has a PhD in Arabic and Islamic studies. Learn about libraries from Wyman Brent, who will speak about the creation of the Vilnius Jewish Public Library, and Yoram Bitton about Jewish libraries in the Middle-Ages. Both SSC and RAS feature sessions on e-books as a means of opening up discussions among our members. Other sessions focus on RAS digitization, talks with and about comic authors and graphic novelists. You will hear from local authors and illustrators, including Maggie Anton speaking about her new series and Newbery Award winning author and illustrator (Breaking Stalin’s Nose) Eugene Yelchin. Sessions on local Jewish history include Jews of Pasadena, Israelis in Los Angeles, Karaites Jews in California and the first LGBT congregation in the world. Please check the website often for updates and additional speakers since, as of this writing, the schedule is still fluid.

Convention concludes this year with a special closing plenary. ALA President Molly Raphael will speak about her vision of the 21st century library: Libraries Thriving in the 21st Century. We will have sessions Wednesday morning and we are featuring our relationship with ALA. Don’t forget that ALA begins right after AJL ends so stick around and head south to Anaheim to attend AJL’s session at ALA and maybe even visit Disneyland.

**Silent Auction**

Start saving your money for the silent auction. We have acquired many exciting items. Film and television writer/producer, Phil Rosenthal (Everybody Loves Raymond) has donated a basket of fun that includes signed DVDs as well as his book chronicling his experiences. Matt Weiner, creator of the current hit show Madmen has generously donated two signed Madmen scripts. Enid Sperber has contributed a sci-fi comic book written and autographed by Leonard Nimoy entitled Primortals with concepts by Isaac Asimov. These are some of the highlights of what we hope will be a fast paced silent auction. In addition, there will be many beautifully hand crafted items by talented AJL members and artwork by Eugene Yelchin and others.
TOURS

Lisa Silverman and Barbara Goelman have planned an amazing array of tours to Los Angeles areas of interest. Due to the high cost of renting buses to take members to these venues, we require a minimum amount of participants. We encourage you to make your decision and sign up as soon as possible. The deadline for sign-ups is June 1, 2012.

Sunday, June 17

A: Historic Los Angeles
1:00-4:30 PM
Price: $30.00 (Lunch Not Included).
For a Kosher Box lunch, please order it under the Meals Only section.
Join us for a tour of historic Los Angeles. This afternoon is sure to be interesting as we visit the Breed Street Shul, in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of East Los Angeles. This shul was once the largest Orthodox synagogue in the western United States and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Our guide will share with us the synagogue’s early history as we tour this historic landmark. We will then take a short ride to Union Station and Olvera Street which is the birthplace of the City of Los Angeles. The colorful village features 27 historic buildings with a traditional Mexican style plaza area. Wander around the marketplace before returning to the bus for a ride through Chinatown on our way back to the hotel.

Wednesday, June 20

B: Bus trip to Museum of Tolerance
1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
Price: $30.00 (includes admission).
For a Kosher Box lunch, please order it under the Meals Only section.
The Museum of Tolerance, sponsored by the Simon Wiesenthal Center, is designed to examine racism and prejudice in the United States and the world, with a strong focus on the history of the Holocaust. Our docent will lead us on an informative 2 hour tour of this world renowned museum. The location of the museum is about a 45 minute bus ride from Pasadena.

C: Huntington Botanical Gardens & Library
1:00-5:00 PM
Price: $25.00 (includes admission)
For a Kosher Box lunch, please order it under the Meals Only section.
The Huntington houses one of the finest research libraries in the world, an established art collection, and over 12 separate areas of botanical gardens with plants from around the world. We will begin with a private, behind-the-scenes tour of the library which is home to some of the finest rare books and manuscripts in the world. Following that, you will have time to leisurely stroll the magnificent gardens or have tea in the Huntington’s Tea Room. (Reservations are suggested at least 2 weeks in advance for tea. 626-683-8131) Anyone who needs to leave earlier than 5 PM can easily take a taxi back to the hotel, which is less than 3 miles away.

D: Skirball Museum
1:00-5:00 PM
Price: $30.00 (includes admission)
For a Kosher Box lunch, please order it under the Meals Only section
Hailed by the New York Times as “a lesson on how to connect the eye to heart and mind,” the Skirball Cultural Center has established itself as one of the world’s most dynamic Jewish cultural institutions and a leading cultural venue in Los Angeles. It seeks to welcome and inspire people of every ethnic and cultural identity in American life. Our docent will lead us on an informative tour of this stunning and extraordinary museum. The location of the museum is about a 45 minute bus ride from Pasadena.
No Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award for 2012

**COMMITTEE CITES FOUR MANUSCRIPTS OF MERIT**

Aileen Grossberg, Chair, Sydney Taylor Manuscript Award Competition

They came by snail mail and email; they were delivered by UPS, FEDEX and USPS; they arrived on discs, as hard copies and as attachments. Finally after the December 15 flurry, they stopped coming. The entries in the 2012 Sydney Taylor Manuscript Competition had arrived and were ready to be dispersed to the five committee members spread out across the country.

The Committee reviewers soon realized that this was the year of the grandparent: manuscript after manuscript had grandparents as either central or supporting characters.

In Roses in Winter, Bobbie Rose leaves behind her grandparents in the Bronx to move with her family to Iowa where her father will become a farmer. Minuet, the main character in The Dare is guided by her grandfather’s principles when she is faced with a moral challenge. Elise and Bianca search for their grandfather’s Renoir, stolen by the Nazis during the Holocaust, in Elise and Bianca on the Art Front.

In Amy’s Grandma Problem, Amy is faced with a fun loving grandmother and a dour, very hard to love grandmother. Hannah Bergen, the main character in The Calypso Shtetl, and her family have had to leave grandparents behind when they fled Nazi Germany. In Echo Still, it is a supportive grandmother who helps Fig’s non-Jewish father raise his son as a Jew fulfilling his deceased wife’s request.

Extended family runs through other manuscripts also even though they may not be central to the story.

Faced with several creative manuscripts that didn’t quite come up to the Award’s standards of writing, character development, plot creativity, broad appeal and positive Jewish atmosphere, the Committee made the unique decision to make no award but to cite four manuscripts as Manuscripts of Merit.

While these manuscripts will be mentioned on the website as worthy of commendation, there will be no prize money awarded and no presentation at Convention.

The Committee hopes that some of the authors will resubmit their manuscripts for reconsideration at a later time.

The following manuscripts have been named Manuscripts of Merit:

**Alice of Eastland** by Leslie Ann Birnbaum. In alternating chapters, the parallel stories of Alice, a young Jewish girl in wartime Germany and Peter, her German neighbor, are revealed. The story deals with questions of friendship, loyalty, identity, the nature of evil and adapting to new circumstances as both children, refugees from Nazi Germany, find themselves strangers in America. A reviewer thought that “the parallel stories of Perle and Peter present a way to understand the difficulties people faced [during the World War II era]”

Leslie Ann Birnbaum is currently an administrative law judge. Her background includes legal work in the areas of ecology, welfare and juvenile law, Previously, Ms Birnbaum produced educational programs for television.

**Amy’s Grandma Problem** by Andrea Fooner. Amy is conflicted in her relationship between her warm, fun-loving grandmother and her grumpy, complaining and always ready to criticize grandmother. How this situation resolves and how Amy learns to love Grandma Bella after spending a day with her teaches Amy and the reader the real meaning of love. One committee member said of Amy’s Grandma Problem that “this story empowers kids. The fact that Amy could manipulate her Grandma gave her power. …...thought provoking.”

Before turning to writing fiction for children, Andrea Fooner had written for the teen magazine CO-ED and for a variety of women’s magazines where she wrote mostly on personal development and social issues. Ms Fooner has a master’s degree from Bank Street College of Education and has been a reading and writing specialist in the New York City Schools. Amy’s Grandma Problem grew out of her own experiences with her grandmothers.
**The Calypso Shtetl** by Mary Rubin. In 1939, Hannah Bergen and her family have escaped Romania to find a haven on the Island of Trinidad. Despite the strangeness of this new country, Hannah and her family adjust to life on the island as increasingly distressing news comes from family remaining in Europe. This story of loss ends on a positive note as the family members realize that they are the future and can carry on both their family and Jewish lives. One judge felt that “Hannah’s innocence and emerging understanding of her world work well to introduce the situation [in Romania] to young readers.”

Ms Rubin is the Director of Membership for the Izaak Walton League of America, a national non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the soil, air, woods, and water of the United States. She is also a freelance writer who has published seven books about Maryland communities. In addition, Ms Rubin was the children's librarian at a Maryland synagogue for several years.

**Echo Still** by Tim Tibbitts. Elijah Samuel Newton's mother died several years ago, but Fig's non-Jewish father is honoring his wife's wish to raise Fig as a Jew. Set against a background of middle school ice hockey, this moving story of death and grief and family confronts issues of identity, honesty, sportsmanship, promises and family values. One reviewer felt that “all the characters are fully recognizable human beings who thought, acted and developed in sensible ways. Fig especially is honest, nuanced and flawed in a way that seems convincing.”

Echo Still is Mr. Tibbitts' first novel although he has worked as a freelance writer for several years, primarily writing feature articles for newspapers and magazines. He is also the founder of The Whole Kid, a tutoring company, and publishes a newsletter for parents of reluctant readers. Mr. Tibbitts has taught English and Social Studies in middle and high school, is currently teaching freshman college composition courses, and was an information specialist in the Fulbright Teacher Exchange program. He is currently working on a second novel.

The Competition will be accepting manuscripts for the 2013 award beginning July 1, 2012. The deadline is December 15, 2012. Rules and application forms are available on the AJL website. In addition to receiving a cash award and national publicity, the author of the winning manuscript will be given the opportunity to have his or her work read by a professional literary agent.

**Member in the News**

Anne Dublin, an AJL member and co-editor for Children & Teen literature, has published a new book!

Anne Dublin will launch her latest book, The Baby Experiment (Dundurn Press), at the Toronto Jewish Book Festival on Wed. June 6, 2012. For more information about this intriguing historical fiction novel, go to: http://www.dundurn.com/books/baby_experiment or see the review by Linda R. Silver in this issue of AJL Reviews. CM Magazine calls The Baby Experiment “a great book for anyone, but it stands out as a book perfect for the classroom with many opportunities to expand on the themes of friendship, tolerance, prejudice, and historical events.” (http://umanitoba.ca/outreach/cm/vol18/no27/thebabyexperiment.html)

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**Don’t forget to read the May/June 2012 issue of AJL Reviews!**

**Over 50 pages of reviews!**
**Chapter Chatter**

**TOBY ROSSNER, CHAPTER RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**CHAPTER RELATIONS NEWS**

Amalia Warshenbrot, Chair chapters@jewishlibraries.org

A call to all AJL members in Texas! As you know, the 2013 AJL Convention will be held in Houston (June 23-26, 2013). The success of every volunteer-run program depends on three key elements:

1. **Advance planning**
2. **Engage as many volunteers as possible**
3. **Each volunteer taking on a small responsibility**

The chairperson of the Texas convention is Judy Weidman from congregation Beth Israel in Houston. Judy and I, along with Uri Kolodney from the University of Texas at Austin, corresponded about the idea of merging the current Texas chapters. Our plan would be to combine the Dallas, Houston and San Antonio chapters into one big chapter. Uri volunteered to gather all email addresses of known AJL members in Texas. If face-to-face meetings would not be feasible, we could always ‘meet’ online. Please email all your contact information to Uri at kolodney@austin.utexas.edu and copy me at chapters@jewishlibraries.org.

Let’s plan ahead! This is the number one key to success!

**SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER (AJLSC)**

Submitted by Lisa Silverman

Twenty-two members of AJLSC enjoyed a special tour of the brand new, 32,000 square feet West Hollywood Library in February. Library Manager Susan Anderson stayed after hours to lead our group. The new library plays the role of a civic center. It provides meeting space for city council meetings, auditoriums for public lectures and performances as well as a unique children's theatre and a café. An expanded green space is used for picnicking and sports activities. We were delighted with the private tour of this special place. We made sure to bring copies of the AJLSC Jewish Book Bibliographies that can be placed on the table in the brochures area to be given away.

Our co-chairs of the convention have been hard at work on the particulars, assisted by the many volunteers who have signed up to help make the Pasadena convention a marvelous success. We look forward to seeing everyone in Pasadena in June!

**HOUSTON CHAPTER**

Submitted by Lisa Klein

The Houston Chapter of the Association of Jewish Libraries is organizing our network and inviting community people to volunteer their support in planning the 2013 AJL National Convention. This is a wonderful opportunity to reach out to community members and get many people involved with the planning and preparations of showcasing our great city!! We hope everyone is planning to come to Houston in June, 2013. It will be hot in more ways than just the weather!!!!

**LONG ISLAND CHAPTER (LI-AJL)**

Submitted by Wendy A. Marx, Chapter President

With a quiet and warm winter came a budding spring for LI-AJL. Partnering with AJL-NYMA was a first for us at the Rare Book Workshop held at the Jewish Theological Seminary on March 26. (See the NYMA contribution below). It is great for chapters to work in collaboration.

Our March 27 meeting was held at the Jericho Jewish Center. The featured speaker was Mr. Russel M. Neiss, Director of Technology and Media Services, Rodeph Sholom Day School, who discussed The eBooks Are Coming; What You Need to Know About the Changes in the World of Publishing. Mr. Neiss introduced us to terms such as DRM, ePub, mobi, AZW and other acronyms you need to know before ordering eBooks.

Our annual meeting with public librarians was held on April 25. This year's topic was Do the Right Thing... Are Ethics out of date?... Is This Cheating?

We will also be having a table at the Long Island Library Conference. This publicizes our group to librarians who do not know that we exist.

These programs bring out existing members and pull in new people who would like to join our group. We LI-AJL librarians know how to get the word out as "People of the Book".
**NEW YORK METROPOLITAN AREA (AJL-NYMA)**

Programs from this chapter are reported at length in a separate article in this issue (directly following Chapter Chatter).

**GREATER CLEVELAND CHAPTER**  
Submitted by Linda Silver

AJL-GCC’s March program was on eBooks. Marla Levine, Associate, Collection Development, OverDrive, Inc., a global digital distributor of eBooks based in Cleveland, spoke about the birth of eBooks and of OverDrive; current trends in eBook publishing, and the future of eBooks and the OverDrive Virtual Branch. OverDrive’s first public library “virtual branch” was launched at the Cleveland Public Library in 2003. As of now, 85% of public libraries in the U.S. circulate eBooks. Overdrive is now moving into the school market. Costs to libraries are based on the library’s service area. For example, a library with a service area under 2,000 pays a $2,000 annual fee for hosting, digital rights, and customer support. There is another fee for content. Very few Jewish libraries are among its customers. Ms. Levine touched on some of the challenges facing eBook providers, including the refusal of some publishers to participate. Among them are Simon and Schuster, Penguin, and Macmillan. Considering the many imprints published by these companies (Atheneum, Dial, Dutton, Putnam, Farrar Straus and Giroux, St. Martin’s, Henry Holt, and Scientific American to mention a few) it is obvious that many books are not available in eBook format through public libraries.

There were many questions from the audience and the discussion was lively. Of the Jewish libraries represented by their librarians at the meeting, none was planning to offer eBooks in the foreseeable future. At the time of the meeting, an article that describes in detail the outlook for libraries in the digital age was not available. It now can be read at [http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/apr12/Coffman--The-Decline-and-Fall-of-the-Library-Empire.shtml](http://www.infotoday.com/searcher/apr12/Coffman--The-Decline-and-Fall-of-the-Library-Empire.shtml). Among the substantial problems associated with eBooks in libraries, the author, Steven Coffman, argues that library eBook lending is not something publishers want to encourage; that e-retailers like Amazon and Barnes and Noble are offering far larger collections of free material than are found in all but our very largest libraries; and that libraries don’t really purchase eBooks: “They license them from publishers or vendors such as Amazon and OverDrive. And it is the terms of those licenses — not the copyright law, or anything else — that determine exactly what libraries can and cannot do with eBooks. Licenses can and do specify to whom the title can be lent. For OverDrive customers, that means only registered patrons who live within the library’s geographic service area…. In short, despite a current fascination with them, the long-term prospects for eBooks in libraries don’t look good. The publishers and most authors really don’t want to see libraries in the market and their terms and conditions are becoming increasingly restrictive. The lack of a first sale doctrine and the burden of licensing terms that libraries are forced to accept undercut their ability to use the resources being paid for as publishers and vendors dictate everything, from whom libraries may lend to, how many times items can be circulated, to what titles may be licensed. And for this, libraries may have to pay nearly twice as much as what would normally be paid for a print version of the same item.”

Synagogue libraries in Cleveland were the subject of an article in the February 23, 2012 issue of the Cleveland Jewish News. Entitled “Underused Synagogue Libraries Speak Volumes,” the article featured several AJL-GCC librarians giving brief descriptions of their libraries and lamenting the fact that congregants, especially adults, don’t use them despite the “treasure troves” found within. Julie Moss of Fairmount Temple summed it up, saying that [while] “synagogue libraries … are underused and under-appreciated…the irony is that public libraries are busier than ever. People are getting things for free they used to spend money on; they are borrowing books and DVDs instead of buying them….Yet, synagogue libraries are struggling for more awareness and usage.” Despite the Cleveland Jewish News’s doggedly upbeat tone, it was not an encouraging picture.

**NEW ENGLAND AJL (NEAJL)**  
Submitted by Ann Abrams, Chapter coordinator

NEAJL held its annual meeting at Temple Emanuel, Newton, MA on May 4. Gil Rosen, Emanuel librarian was our host.

The two sessions were:
- **Making History: Synagogue Replication Project**, with Rick and Laura Brown, co-founders of HandsHouse Studio. Their program creates projects outside of the traditional classroom that energize history through the reconstruction of large historical objects. One such construction, part of the The Wooden Synagogue Replication Projects, is constructing an authentic wooden ceiling that will be painted to replicate the original
Gwoździec Synagogue in Poland. This replica will be housed in the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews, to open in Warsaw in 2013. The Browns also talked about the documentary film that they are creating in conjunction with this project.

- *The Wonderful World of E-Books!* - facilitated by Jane Zande, Librarian at Congregation Beth Israel, West Hartford, CT; and Cathy Balshone, Librarian at Newton Public Library.

**NYMA Articles**
Submitted by Shaindy Kurzmann, Marion Stein, Liza Stabler, and Hallie Cantor

[Editor’s note: Below are three summaries of NYMA’s recent programs by members of their chapter (New York Metropolitan Area aka AJL-NYMA). These articles have not been edited.]

**AJL-NYMA Rare Books/Archives Workshop**

*Shaindy Kurzmann*

On March 26, 2012, the New York Metropolitan Area Chapter held a regional workshop at The Jewish Theological Seminary of America devoted to Rare Books and Archives Collections in the Digital Age: The Impact, the Direction and the Conversation. The program, which was sponsored by AJL National, featured speakers from The Jewish Theological Seminary of New York (JTS), the Library of Congress, Yeshiva University (YU), Stanford University, and Sotheby’s New York. Librarians and archivists from several colleges and universities, including JTS, YU, Columbia, Pratt, St. Johns, Johns Hopkins, and Lafayette College (Easton, PA) as well as from the Frick Collection, the Morgan Library & Museum, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Silver Spring, MD) attended this excellent workshop.

Naomi M. Steinberger, Director of Library Services, The Jewish Theological Seminary, welcomed all of us and commented on how fitting it was that her institution was hosting the conference inasmuch as it has taken the lead in many digitization projects during the past decade. Items digitized by JTS include primary source materials, sound recordings, newspaper clippings, and eighteenth and nineteenth century pamphlets in addition to traditional historical and religious documents. While some of these projects were completed in-house, JTS also participated in collaborative projects with other institutions, especially in digitizing several medieval manuscripts. A new digitization lab, funded by the Leonard Polonsky Fund, is in the planning stages. This climate-controlled lab will make high-quality images of precious illuminated manuscripts and will also accommodate bound works.

Dr. Peggy K. Pearlstein, Head, Hebraic Section, African and Middle Eastern Division, Library of Congress (LC), presented a philosophical overview of LC digitization projects in her talk titled Wonders of the World: The Taj Mahal and Rare Books, inspired by her trip to India not long ago and by two recent New York Times articles that reference the Taj Mahal. In the first article, Salman Rushdie describes his awe upon first seeing the Taj Mahal in person after having seen it in photographs, but wonders whether constant reproduction might be devaluing the original. In the second article, the Taj Mahal was described as less imposing than expected because the author had seen so many photos of it. Dr. Pearlstein questioned whether digitization might indeed contribute to a lessening of the impact upon seeing the original object. On the other hand, as she pointed out, most of us will not see the original book, manuscript, or building, so digitization opens infinite windows through which we can enter another culture.

Because all LC exhibits since 1993 have been digitized, there is a wealth of information available online. Dr. Pearlstein demonstrated LC’s American Memory website as well as the World Digital Library, a cooperative project of LC and UNESCO together with partner libraries, archives, and educational and cultural institutions from the United States and around the world. The mission of the World Digital Library mission is to bring “together on a single website rare and unique documents...that tell the story of the world’s cultures.” (http://www.loc.gov/wdl/)

Shulamith Z. Berger, Curator of Special Collections, Mendel Gottesman Library, Yeshiva University, presented Meditations on Digitization: An Archival Perspective, a look at digitization projects at the Yeshiva University Archives. Whereas early projects at YU focused on digitizing selected items that had been part of physical exhibits, complete with detailed descriptions, the focus has shifted to producing virtual exhibits organized around a particular theme, thus creating born-digital exhibitions. Yeshiva University has also digitized a collection of audio tapes, and we were informed that there are many steps involved between digitizing the sound file and actually making it available online.

As Ms. Berger emphasized, not only does digitizing an item make it accessible to more people, but it can highlight specific aspects of the item, thus enhancing it. She also touched upon archives management:
an important aspect of this is determining the effectiveness of the finding aids that are in place. Prevailing
tought encourages the use of finding aids as guides to the overall collection, and the information provided
should be as complete as possible.

Sharon Liberman Mintz, Curator of Jewish Art at the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary, in
her talk on Seeing is Believing: Graphics Collections Online, reviewed examples of the work of the various
entities that digitize collections: libraries, museums, educational institutions, national initiatives, international
initiatives, and private individuals.

A fascinating project is the international Europeana, which is “a single access point to millions of books,
paintings, films, museum objects and archival records that have been digitised throughout Europe…Europeana
enables people to explore the digital resources of Europe's museums, libraries, archives and audio-visual
collections.” (http://www.europeana.eu/portal/)

Examples of national initiatives are Gallica and The National Library of Israel. Gallica: Bibliothèque
Numérique, from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, provides easy access to an enormous collection of
French source material not previously available to most researchers. (http://gallica.bnf.fr/?lang=EN) The
National Library of Israel offers access to both Israeli and international collections, though its emphasis is
html) Collectors from all over the world are asked to submit items to The National Library of Israel so that
researchers will be able not only to view but also to compare images.

Ms. Mintz pointed out that there are online collections from several European museums. Unfortunately,
however, it is not possible to search across all of them at once. Additional difficulties in searching them are
the different terminology and vernacular terms used by each museum and the fact that the virtual exhibits
are not all equally user-friendly.

Who is keeping track of all these materials and websites? Ms. Mintz raised this concern, and she would
like to see much more collaboration among the institutions. As a step in this direction, The Center for Jewish
History, an educational institution based in New York City, might join with Europeana. This collaboration
will improve the searchability of and accessibility to the materials of both collections.

Zachary M. Baker, Assistant University Librarian for Collection Development – Humanities and Social
Sciences, and Reinhard Family Curator of Judaica and Hebraica Collections, Stanford University, discussed
Special Collecting in the University Research Library: The View from Stanford. Though much of his presentation
dealt with the acquisition of specific rare items and proprietary digitized collections, he also recommended
a few free digital resources. Compact Memory provides full-text access to German-Jewish periodicals from
the 20th centuries and Internet Archive, a non-profit digital library, offers free access to books, movies, and
music, as well as billions of archived web pages. (http://www.compactmemory.de/ and http://archive.org/
index.php)

The final speaker of the workshop, David Wachtel, Senior Consultant for Judaica, Books & Manuscripts
Department, Sotheby’s, New York, described the point of view held by some of his clients in his talk on
Parchment, Paper and Pixels: Collectors’ Attitudes to Digitization of Rare Books and Manuscripts. Although
libraries and archives view digitization as a way of allowing people who are not able to physically visit their
institutions to view their materials, and as a way of maintaining access to items that were shown in exhibits
that have already been dismantled, private collectors often do not wish to share their acquisitions in any format,
physical or digital. Mr. Wachtel reiterated the value of digitizing material as a way to make it more widely
available to researchers, students, and the general public, and expressed his hope that Sotheby’s customers
will see the value of digitizing the books that they purchase.

Each of the speakers at the Rare Books/Archives Workshop focused, naturally, on the digitization projects
of his or her individual institution, but they all reminded us of the people who stand behind the projects and
who make the decisions about what to digitize. Whether the objects being considered for the project are at-
risk rarities, cultural icons, or virtual exhibits, many factors come into play. These include the mission of the
individual institution and the public it serves as well as insight into how the items selected might enhance
viewers’ knowledge. All of us attending this workshop gained a clear understanding of the philosophical
underpinnings of a digitization project.

Following the formal workshop program, there was a presentation of fascinating items from the Rare Book
Collection of the Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America prepared by Dr. David Kraemer, the
Joseph J. and Dora Abbell Librarian. Among the highlights were several illuminated manuscripts and early
printed books, including incunabula. Dr. Kraemer showed us a fifteenth century Haggadah that had directions
about including or skipping the “Ma Nishtanah” depending on whether or not the Seder participants had
already – on their own – raised questions; with Pesach arriving less than two weeks after the workshop, this was wonderfully apropos. Another intriguing item was a volume by RaDaK (Rabbi David Kimchi, 1160-1235) that had been censored by Church officials in 1584. During the past four hundred years, however, the censor's ink has faded, so we now can read quite clearly the passages that the Church had attempted to obscure.

Seeing these rarities underscored an important lesson about digitization: it is better to view an item in person, but seeing a digitized version is considerably better than not having any access to it at all. And the relatively recent phenomenon of readily available online access to global treasures that digitization affords us has significantly enriched both research and scholarship.

**AJL-NYMA School Workshop**

*Submitted by Marion Stein*

The annual NYMA Day School Workshop was held at SAR Academy on Wednesday morning, March 14th and was coordinated by Rachel Glasser and Leah Moskovits. The focus of the workshop was how Israel is portrayed in the media. Mark Weitzman, Director of Government Affairs and Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center Task Force Against Hate and Terrorism, spoke on *Web of Lies: Distorted Images of Jews, Judaism and Israel in The Media* and Joyce Levine, Librarian at North Shore Hebrew Academy High School and AJL SSC President, discussed *Surfing the Treacherous Wave of Anti-Israel Propaganda;* guiding your students in research on Israel. These were two important and urgently needed presentations on the issue of how to present these difficult topics to our students. The subject matter is appropriate for both middle and high school where students must learn to distinguish truth from ideological propaganda. This is never easy even for thoughtful adults. How can we be relatively sure that what we read is true, objective and fair? The real answer is that we cannot be sure; we can only try to follow the best practices based on the most reliable sources we can find.

Mark Weitzman gave us a sobering talk on how to prepare ourselves and our students for what may encountered on the Internet. As we all know, our students no longer rely mainly on vetted print materials when doing research, but rather find information on YouTube and social media sites in addition to other online sources. One of the dangers we face is the speed at which information, or disinformation, can spread via these tools. Mr. Weitzman gave the example of a piece on Jon Stewart's show that 'went viral' in a matter of hours or even minutes.

Mr. Weitzman then showed us the evolution of Mark Weber’s site, ‘Institute of Historical Review’ (IHR) and how it morphed from being an openly anti-Semitic site to being more nuanced in order to appeal to youth. This was accomplished by hitting hot-button topics like 'anti-globalization', 'anti-war' and 'ecology'. Once you are on the site, he strips away the façade to reveal the true topics which are viciously anti-Israel and anti-Semitic. Our speaker went on to tell about how innocuous visuals can be used to send the wrong message. For example, Currier and Ives prints have been used to show smiling slaves working in the fields as well as altered images of Holocaust victims with Gaza signage superimposed on them. One of the most egregious pictures he showed was of the US Capitol building as a backdrop to a picture of dead Holocaust victims with a sign saying that this was what the Obama Health Care would look like.

Mr. Weitzman mentioned a few other extreme examples of misuse of Jewish texts and sophisticated distortions that occur in the media and in print. We all need to be vigilant when assigning topics for research to our students and to be sure to make them aware of the traps they may encounter. Our speaker recommended a book about Israeli anti-Semitism by Elhanan Yakira of Hebrew University entitled *Post-Zionism, Post-Holocaust: Three essays on denial, forgetting and the de-legitimation of Israel.* He also recommended The 10 Top Anti-Israel Lies, [http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/s/content.asp?c=lsKWlbPjLnF&b=4442915&ct=820538](http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/apps/s/content.asp?c=lsKWlbPjLnF&b=4442915&ct=820538).

Before starting, Joyce Levine reminded us that we all have a bias and we need to be aware of this. The first subject she mentioned was hidden and overt bias in regular resources. For example, certain phraseology can tip us off to an anti-Israel bias. When we see "Occupied Palestine" or "Zionist Entity" we can be pretty sure that what will follow will not be friendly toward Israel. The three volume *Encyclopedia of Racism,* published by Gale in 2008 has Zionism listed as an example of racism. Suzi Dubin, then AJL President and many others wrote to Gale protesting. Joyce then told us about three databases that we need to be clear about. The first is BBC Country Profiles. A simple examination of the photos that are used as headers for each country tells a story by itself. Bahrain has a picture of a modern building, Egypt has a photo of an historic mosque, Syria has a picture of a Muslim family and Israel has a picture of an IDF soldier arguing with a man, presumably an Arab, and the caption talks about the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. This shows clear anti-Israel bias. Another database is *Facts on File: Issues and Controversies* where the text seems neutral, but includes side bars that are clearly anti-Israel. The third database, *Country Watch,* begins the Israel entry with an
even-handed statement that the conflict must be seen in the context of terror attacks on Israel and Israelis.

Joyce recommended a website, www.Hackerhandbooks.com that sells handbooks containing tips for evaluating sources and she suggests reading reviews carefully before buying books. Additionally, Pro-Israel bias can be found on a site called Self-hating and/or Israel Threatening (the SHIT list). A good and balanced site, on the other hand, is the Jewish Virtual Library where one can find Mitchell Bard's Myths and Facts, which is now only published online. Joyce closed with a list of online publications that demonstrate a range of points of view. They include: Tablet, Jewish Ideas Daily, Times of Israel, Israel 21c.org, APN.org, JWR (Jewish World Review) and JTA (Jewish Telegraphic Agency).

In conclusion caveat emptor and keep an open mind!

I (aS in PaD) B4 e (aS in reaDe r)? - Boo ks & oth er De vi ces @ Ref Work shop

Elizabeth F. Stabler, Librarian, Temple Emanu-El & Hallie Cantor, Acquisitions, Yeshiva University; Photos by Tina Weiss

So...what are you downloading these days?

Those of you who attended NYMA’s 2012 Reference Workshop -- held Tues., Jan. 17th at The Abraham Joshua Heschel High School; organized by Leslie Monchar and Bruchie Weinstein; and hosted by Cantor Shimon Vogel, librarian at Heschel -- learned that you're not alone as far as our newfangled technology. The ebooks are Coming, the eBooks Are Coming! What You Need to Know about the Changes in the World of Publishing gave timid librarians a tour through a brave new world, where the printed word might go the way of horse and buggy sooner than we think.

F ace oF Bo o k i n Fa c eBo o k ag e

The program began with Ahuva Halberstam, High School Head. Enthusiastic about new technology, she declared, “We are on the cusp of a paradigm shift as we learn the potential of eBooks in education,” yet lamented the greatest loss: “the multisensory impact of reading a book.” Most important, however, “is that children continue to read and not just hop and browse about on Google and Facebook.”

In his presentation DRM, ePub, Mobi, AZW and Other Acronyms You Need to Know Before Ordering eBooks, the first speaker, Russell M. Neiss -- Director of Technology and Media Services, Rodeph Sholom Day School – asked the question: What do we really mean when we say “E-Book?” He clarified both the types of technology listed in the title of his talk and the problems involved in the universe of eBooks in libraries. American system: each talks a different language. Accessing media, then, becomes a regional and somewhat closed experience.

Neiss highlighted the four major “problems” in trying to incorporate eBooks into libraries. The first: What device to use? Not only is each device different, but proprietary. He does not recommend Kindle, as Amazon is ignoring emerging standards. The ideal device, not yet developed, should have ePub and Adobe Digital Editions software. Calibre, an open source device, is excellent, but it is not getting the eBooks.

Second: How to find and obtain eBooks through jobbers? Or is everything these days available through Apple stores or Amazon? Of all publishers, only one -- Random House/ Bertelsmann Vorlag -- has made eBooks unavailable to libraries, preferring instead to sell only to individuals. EBooks are also limited in scope, as no publisher has taken advantage of the Epub software’s capacity to incorporate video, audio and canvas into their eBooks. Ebsco and Ebrary have their own, respective subscription services.

Third: Licensing. At present only larger libraries or library systems can afford to license with Overdrive. Because the distribution system for journal articles was developed earlier and on a different model, it is still more open despite attempts to limit access. Ironically, libraries are not even obtaining the content – rather, the rights to the content – which can disappear once it goes “out of print,” or these days, “out of the Cloud.” Other issues such as self-publishing, which Amazon has planned, can compromise quality of content, let alone accessibility.

For libraries, managing an ebook collection is currently a nightmare. Librarians must deal with limited numbers of downloads/users for each ebook,
severely limited use of interlibrary loans, complicated account and payment for the devices and downloads, copyright laws, and organization of usernames to access the eBooks. In addition, electronic devices are fragile and easily lost (or stolen!).

Which brings this all to the final problem: obsolescence of hardware. Betamax, anyone? While a 14th century Haggadah is fully accessible, poetry stored on 3.5-inch floppies is not. In short, Neiss does not recommend that libraries acquire ebook technology until these problems have been resolved.

Neiss ended his talk with a tongue-in-cheek video clip on the latest achievement: the printed book. Its features:
- Energy efficient -- no batteries needed!
- Easy on the eyes!
- User-friendly -- simply turn the pages!
- Never goes out of style!

Because of the last reason alone, this marvel just might stay on the library shelf years from now, long after the e-version (or its licensing) has expired and the supply of apps – and Apples – go by way of Atari.

GOING MOBILE

Due to a work-related emergency, Peter W. Tobey, Director of Sales and Marketing, Salem Press, was not able to present Use, Popularity, and Value in Libraries. Nevertheless, Leslie Monchar stepped in and ably reported on Mr. Tobey’s thoughts. Leslie had the opportunity to work on a project for Salem Press in the summer of 2011, when Salem, which markets bundles of electronic database reference materials to libraries, bought H.W. Wilson’s databases.

According to Leslie, Tobey feels that eBooks will grow in importance in libraries. Although published books will continue to be produced, the market will be less robust. Readers will want to use different formats at different times or circumstances.

An example of the potential for eBooks is the Betty Crocker Mobile Cookbook (one on which he had worked): the cookbook app suggests recipes based on ingredients the cook has entered. Reference especially, which lives and dies on its ability to remain up-to-date and accessible, would greatly benefit from the digital. Nevertheless, print will always be around – only less needed.

A lively discussion followed about the challenges librarians have encountered. Some of the attendees pointed out the issues with vendors’ arbitrarily ending libraries’ access to a product upon publishing a new edition within months of the original purchase. Clearly, while eBooks have opened up a brave new world, there is no such thing as a world without problems, and the digital is bound to present many.

The workshop, with attendees from as far as Baltimore, was a great success and provided an excellent opportunity to learn as well as to share information on important new technological developments.

LESLIE MONCHAR: “The market for print will be less robust. This is a brave new world; there is no such thing as a world without problems, and the digital is bound to present many.”

Keep Up to Date with Hasafran

Hasafran is the electronic discussion list of the Association of Jewish Libraries. It was created in 1991 to provide a forum for the discussion of Judaica librarianship. The list is moderated by Joseph (Yossi) Galron, Jewish studies librarian at The Ohio State University. The views expressed in the list are the opinions of the participants and not necessarily the views of the moderator or of AJL.

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We will be collecting tzedakah for Mazon at the Banquet.

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