

AJL Conference 2017 - Request for proposals

The Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) will hold its annual conference entitled "The Sky's the Limit: The Next Generation of Judaica Librarianship" at Hebrew Union College in New York, NY from Monday, June 19 - Wednesday, June 21, 2017. Librarians, archivists, scholars, educators, authors, and others will meet to share their interest in Judaica librarianship, Jewish history and culture, and related topics.

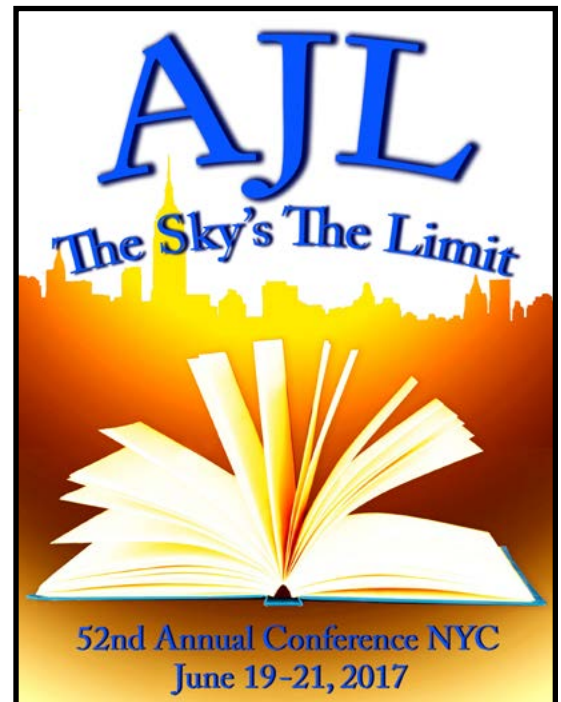
AJL is soliciting proposals for papers and presentations on all aspects of Judaica librarianship as it pertains to libraries, archives, museums, schools, synagogues, and related institutions. Past topics have included: collection management, programming, reader advisory services, special and rare collections, cataloging and classification, digital and electronic resources and emerging technologies. The 2017 conference will have a special focus on the international nature of AJL and New York City, and we encourage international presentations (and attendees!). Submissions dealing with topics such as programming, cataloging and linked data, collaboration, digital curation and dissemination, genealogy, and social media in libraries are especially welcome.

Submissions should include the following:

- Presenter's name, address, affiliation, telephone and email contacts.
- Brief biography
- Title of proposed presentation
- Summary of proposal
- Specific technology or equipment requirements, if any

All submissions must be received by November 30, 2016. Please submit proposals by e-mail (PREFERRED) to: conference@jewishlibraries.org

Proposals will be reviewed by the Program Planning Committee, which is composed of national and local AJL members. Notification will be made in January, 2017.



AJL Online



Visit the AJL Web site at <http://www.jewishlibraries.org>.

To subscribe to the AJL mailing list, Hasafran, please see instructions at <https://lists.service.ohio-state.edu/mailman/listinfo/hasafran>

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Interview with Richard Ungar, author of *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah*

by Barbara Bietz, Past Chair, Sydney Taylor Book Award Committee

Richard Ungar is an award-winning author, illustrator, and practicing lawyer. He creates picture books and also writes middle-grade fiction. His recent release, *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah* is a tale set in Chelm, described as “a celebration of community, thoughtfulness and the magic of Hanukkah.” Richard took time out of his very busy life to share a bit about his new book and his creative process.



Folktales are so important in Jewish tradition. What drew you toward *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah*?

I love the tradition of folktales and have always been drawn to them and, in particular, to tales of the people of Chelm. Also, for a long time I wanted to write a story that took place during Hanukkah. I had already written stories that take place during Passover (*Rachel's Gift*; Tundra, 2003) and Rosh Hashanah (*Even Higher*; Tundra, 2007), so in some ways Hanukkah was ‘on my list.’ There are some wonderful Hanukkah stories and picture books out there. One of my all-time favorites is *Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins* (Holiday House, 1989) written by Eric Kimmel with illustrations by Trina Schart Hyman – a perfect marriage of art and text! I knew that one day I would write and illustrate a Hanukkah story.

The stories of Chelm had been delighting children and their parents for generations. What do you think is the timeless magic of stories like *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah*?

I always enjoyed the stories of Chelm growing up and enjoy them even more as an adult. On one hand the people of Chelm seem very silly to me, but I think what intrigued me then (and continues to intrigue me now) is that there is also a kind of wisdom in the silliness. And that to themselves, they are not silly at all. And also the sense that any problem can be solved if one puts one’s mind to it.... like capturing the moon in a rain barrel so as to be able to gaze on it night and day. The people of Chelm may be quirky but they get things done! The spirit of cooperation among the Chelmites (if there is a problem, the entire village often gets into the act to try to solve it) is wonderful, and they are never mean spirited.

Can you share a bit about your illustrations and how they were created?

I wanted to challenge myself with creating the art for this book. As it happens, shortly before the manuscript was accepted I went on an art retreat – I took an intensive week long course on how to create watercolor monoprints. In a nutshell, monoprinting is a printmaking technique where you paint on glass and then, using a printing press, transfer the image to paper (in this case watercolor paper) during the printing phase. The paper is soaked in water prior to printing to facilitate the image transfer.

The effects can be dazzling – and results in all sorts of interesting patterns that cannot be achieved through direct painting on paper. There is also a surprising and unpredictable element to the process (which definitely adds to the fun but also to the stress level!) because when you peel the print off the press you can never really be sure how it will turn out.

When I came home from the art retreat I was hooked – and for the next couple of weeks, I went through what I call my ‘Monoprint Madness’ period where I spent a lot of time in my basement studio churning out monoprint after monoprint. Since I don’t own a printing press, I used a simpler method to do the image transfer – rubbing the back of the image with a wooden spoon. After some experimentation, I found that to achieve the necessary degree of “readability” of the images for the purposes of children’s book illustration, I needed to add fine details and also to rework the images after they had been printed.

I also did some spot drawings on the pages opposite the full color illustrations to add balance. For these I use a compressed charcoal stick and drew them close to the sizes they appear in the book. My full color illustrations by comparison are quite large: 20 inches by 30 inches.

What do you “picture” first - the story or the art? In other words, how is your inspiration sparked?

Most times I find that the story comes first and then I plot out the art and what scenes I will depict. Having said that, even though I write the story first, because I am a very visual person, sometimes the inspiration for a story can come from a picture or an image. Because I wrote *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah* some years ago (it sat on my computer while I was busy writing the *Time Snatchers Series* (GP Putnam’s Sons Books for Young Readers, 2012)), I can’t recall the specific inspiration for the story but it might well have been surfing the net and seeing a photo of a giant menorah. I do remember that my middle grade novel *Time Snatchers* was definitely inspired by a single image – from Chris Van Allsburg’s picture book, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (Houghton Mifflin, 1984). The image, a drawing called “Another Place, Another Time,” shows children riding a sail-propelled handcar along a railway track that seems to go on forever.

You write both middle grade fiction and picture books. How different is the creative process?

For me a picture book has to come to me almost in its entirety before I sit down to write it. I need to know upfront the problem/source of tension/obstacle to be overcome for the beginning of the book, and I also need to know the solution at the end. What I sometimes don’t need to know immediately and will work out during the writing phase are the ways in which the protagonist and/or other characters try to solve the problem before they ultimately succeed.

As an example, when the idea for *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah* came to me I knew immediately that the problem would be how to thank the Mayor of Lublin for the gift of the Giant Menorah. I also knew that the child (Yitzi) would solve the problem on the very last day of Hanukkah and how he would solve it. Finally, I knew that there would be three (failed) attempts to solve the problem before Yitzi succeeded. What I didn’t know was that the failed attempts would involve latkes, a dreidel and special Chelm snow!

For a novel, the process for me is a bit different. In the past I have tried working from an outline, but I found that too constraining. Generally, I know how the novel will end but getting there is definitely a challenge and one that I now solve only during the writing phase. Characters in a novel are an unruly mob, and sometimes want to take the novel in totally different directions from what I intended - not all of them good directions! It’s a good thing that I enjoy writing for writing’s sake because there were many chapters that never made it into my finished novels as a result of one character or another going off on a tangent...

Finally, as a practicing lawyer how do you find the time for writing and illustrating?

It’s not easy! First I have a very supportive and understanding family. Also, I do most of my art or writing on weekends or late at night (I’m a bit of a night owl and may sometimes go down to my studio at 10 p.m. and work until midnight). I also try to fit my writing time in whenever I can -- sometimes early morning before work or if I am travelling on trains or on long car drives (I have been known to sit in the back seat with my laptop while my wife drives to the cottage).

Also, to reduce the pressure, where possible I try to negotiate ahead of time with the publisher a longer deadline for delivering the final art for a picture book to allow for busy periods at my ‘day job’ (e.g. *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah* was created over a two-year period).

Is there any other information that you’d like to share?

Yes, thanks for asking! I’m involved in an exciting project with PJ Library connected with *Yitzi and the Giant Menorah*. With technical help from my son, I videotaped many of my drawing, painting and printing sessions and, working together with the creative folks at PJ Library, have produced a series of short video clips showing my creative process. We are in the final editing phase and the series will appear on the PJ Library on-line blog.

Learn more about Richard Ungar and his books at www.richard-ungar.com

Yitzi and the Giant Menorah is reviewed on page 3 of the November/December issue of *AJL Reviews*.

CHAPTER CHATTER

AJL SOUTH CALIFORNIA (AJLSC)

Submitted by Lisa Silverman, Library Director, Burton Sperber Jewish Community Library

AJLSC has not yet had our fall meeting but many of our members enjoyed attending the Open House celebration for the new Sperber Jewish Community Library, which is part of the American Jewish University, and conjoined with the Ostrow Academic Library. The library was dedicated by the Sperber family in memory of noted philanthropist and landscape developer Burton Sperber. For many years there was a Jewish Community Library on Wilshire Blvd. in Los Angeles, housed in the well-known Jewish Federation building. That library closed a number of years ago and many of the holdings were brought up to AJU. Along with the items that were kept from the original library, the new Sperber Library goal is to collect items of recent publication dates and offer community programming such as book clubs and movie screenings. The open house event on September 25 was attended by almost 200 people and included a children's concert and magic show, plus craft making, a film screening, and an appearance by BARK, a local group that brings therapy dogs that sit on blankets while children read to them. A fine time was had by all!

AJL CAPITAL AREA CHAPTER (AJL/CAC)

Submitted by Yermiyahu Ahron Taub, Chapter President

On Sunday, August 28, 2016 (24 Av 5776), members of the Association of Jewish Libraries/Capital Area Chapter (AJL/CAC) visited the Jewish Museum of Maryland located in downtown Baltimore. The group explored both the Museum's permanent and temporary exhibitions. "Voices of Lombard Street: a Century of Change in East Baltimore" provided a vivid introduction to the neighborhood through artifacts, detailed story boards, and audio recordings. "Beyond Chicken Soup: Jews & Medicine in America" offered a fascinating history of the American Jewish connection with doctors, health and healing, and the medical profession. A docent took the group on a tour of two nearby beautifully restored historic synagogues that are part of the Museum's Herbert



AJL/CAC Members at the Jewish Museum of Maryland, from left to right: Ben Cooper holding Gila Ruth Cooper, Dina Herbert, Kathy Bloomfield, Yermiyahu Ahron Taub, and Rivka Yerushalmi.

Bearman campus: the Lloyd Street and the Chizuk Amuno Synagogues. The Lloyd Street Synagogue was constructed in 1845 in the Greek Revival style and is no longer in use as a place of worship. Founded in 1873, the Chizuk Amuno Synagogue was constructed in the Moorish Revival architectural style and is still in use for Modern Orthodox services by the Bnai Israel Synagogue. Both synagogues are on the National Register of Historic Places. Our synagogues tour group included individuals from a wide array of ages and backgrounds, including several tourists from Germany and a family from Long Island, N.Y.

While walking outside the Museum, we noticed Yiddish plaques stating "ירושה שפאציר/yerushe shpatsir" (heritage walk) embedded in the brick sidewalks. We were delighted to see Yiddish words on the sidewalks of Baltimore.

Following our museum visit, the group had lunch at nearby Attman's Deli. The menu offered a wide array of delicious options, including some playfully named (e.g. Hazza-Rye and The gay liberation) sandwiches. The deli trip reminded us of the importance of Jewish foodways for Jewish identity and the interplay of past and present as offered to the palate. We were stepping back in time but we were also tasting Jewish culinary tradition interpreted anew.

AJL/CAC offers special thanks to Chapter Vice-President Kathy Bloomfield for the organizing the outing.

Members in the News

Anne Dublin received the Canadian Jewish Literary Award (Youth Literature) for her historical novel, *44 Hours or Strike!* (Second Story Press) at a gala awards ceremony at York University, Toronto, on October 30, 2016. Here is a quote from their mission statement: "The Canadian Jewish Literary Awards (CJLA) recognize the finest books with Jewish themes and subjects by Canadian authors in a variety of genres. They enrich and promote Canadian Jewish writing and culture, enabling us to better understand our collective past, our shared present, and the world of the future." For more information about these awards, go to: www.cjlawards.ca.

Scholarship Committee Report

Submitted by Sarah Barnard, Scholarship Committee member

Donations to the AJL Scholarship Fund help deserving students in Library and Information Science programs by providing up to two annual scholarships. Our profession really needs some new and younger Librarians who can take the place of those of us who are soon to retire. Can you think of a better way to encourage them than to help support their studies?

If you know of anyone who might want to apply for a scholarship, (\$1000 to a student enrolled or accepted in a graduate school of library and information science) have that person contact Tina Weiss, TWeiss@huc.edu or look at the [AJL website](#) to get the application and other information.

You can donate on the [website](#) or by check. If it is on the website, be sure to fill in the information about the occasion and the donor. It will get to me and I will send the tribute card. If you send a check, be sure to add your name and address or email and the name, address and reason for the donation for the tribute card. I look forward to hearing from you. Send check donations to:

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P.O. Box 1118
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The AJL Newsletter (Irene Levin-Wixman z"l, founding editor) was published in print from 1979 to 2010 by the Association of Jewish Libraries to inform members about AJL activities and issues related to Judaica libraries. As of January 2011 it is split into two separate electronic publications – the AJL News and the AJL Reviews. Receipt of these publications is one of the benefits of membership. Please see the AJL website at <http://www.jewishlibraries.org> for membership rates.

Editor-in-Chief

Uri Kolodney
University of Texas Libraries
The University of Texas at Austin
One University Station S5400
Austin, TX 78712-8916
generaleditor@jewishlibraries.org

Adult Review Editors

Daniel Scheide	Dr. Rebecca Jefferson
S.E. Wimberly Library	Head, Isser and Rae Price
Florida Atlantic University	Library of Judaica
777 Glades Road	539, Library West
Boca Raton, FL 33431-6424	George A. Smathers Libraries
561-297-0519	University of Florida
dascheide@gmail.com	Gainesville, FL. 32611-7010
	Phone: (352) 273-2650
	Fax: (352) 392-8118
	jefferson@ufl.edu

Please send adult books for review to D. Scheide

Children and YA Review Editors

Rachel Kamin
1054 Holly Circle
Lake Zurich, IL 60047
rachelkamin@gmail.com
and Chava (Kathe) Pinchuck
kpinchuck@gmail.com

Please send children's and YA books for review to Rachel Kamin

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We cannot be responsible for broken links to those resources in the future.

AJL News
November/December 2016
Volume VI, No. 4
ISSN 2160-0902

Copy Editing and Page Layout

Karen Ulric
Golda Och Academy
1418 Pleasant Valley Way
West Orange, NJ 07052
ajlcopyeditor@gmail.com

Please send requests for membership and dues information to:

AJL VP for Membership
Shulamis Hes
Pollack Library
Yeshiva University
500 West 185th St.
New York, NY 10033
membership@jewishlibraries.org

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Jackie Ben-Efraim
Ostrow Library
American Jewish University
15600 Mulholland Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90077
(818) 383-9672 (cell)
ajladmanager@gmail.com