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The Association of Jewish Libraries Announces the 2024 Fanny Goldstein Merit Award Winner

The Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL) is proud to announce that longtime member Gail Shirazi has been named the 2024 Fanny Goldstein Merit Award Winner. The 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 of Jewish Libraries and to the profession of Judaic librarianship.

Gail Shirazi began her career in 1976 as a secretary and bibliographic assistant in the Hebraic Section at the Library of Congress. Thanks to her knowledge of Hebrew, she was transferred to the Exchange and Gift Division (covering Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, including Israel), where she worked as a library technician. From there, she eventually advanced to the position of Senior Librarian in the Israel and Judaica Section, Asian and Middle Eastern Division, at the Library of Congress, a position she held until her retirement in 2023. In that role, Gail oversaw the acquisition of materials from Israel, in all formats and in all languages, as well as Jewish Studies material from other parts of the world. Her tireless collection development efforts enriched and expanded the Hebraica collections at the Library of Congress in multiple ways.

Gail’s educational journey includes earning a master of library science from the Catholic University of America’s School of Library and Information Science in 1985 and a master’s degree in international relations from Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Public Administration and International Affairs in 1975. During her undergraduate studies at the University of Maryland (political science, 1974), she spent one year abroad at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, focusing on international relations (1972–1973).

Her involvement in the Association of Jewish Libraries began when she joined the association in 1989. Since then—for over three decades—Gail not only attended almost every AJL annual
conference, but also has advocated for the profession of Judaica and Hebraica librarianship by way of serving on AJL committees, giving presentations, and being instrumental in connecting AJL members within and outside the organization. Throughout the years, she has served on several conference organizing committees, conference programming committees, conference stipend committees, and on the international initiative committee.

Along with these contributions to the field of Judaica librarianship, Gail dedicated her time and people skills to forge connections not only among individual librarians, scholars, authors, and artists, but also among libraries and other cultural heritage institutions. These convergences often generated innovative programs for AJL as well as public events, were developed into interinstitutional collaborations, initiated resource exchanges among libraries, and secured book donations in appropriate library collections. Through these activities, Gail strengthened the AJL community, educated a great many people about Jewish culture and history, and further enhanced Judaica collections in libraries other than Library of Congress.

Gail’s retirement after 47 years at the Library of Congress has not prevented her from continuing to support Jewish libraries. Although she is retired from her formal role at the Library of Congress, she remains engaged by volunteering there once a week. She takes pride in organizing programs on Judaic and Israeli topics at the library and collaborates with organizations like Magen David Sephardic Congregation, Classrooms without Borders, and AJL.

Rachel Leket-Mor, award committee chair, commented, “On behalf of the Fanny Goldstein Merit Award committee, we are proud to have the opportunity to honor Gail Shirazi as this year’s recipient of the Award. Gail’s energy and creativity are ever so appreciated by the Association of Jewish Libraries membership. Following the legacy of Fanny Goldstein, the Award’s namesake, Gail is an inspiration to the field of Judaic librarianship and librarianship as a profession overall.” Gail will receive her award during a special luncheon at the annual conference of the Association of Jewish Libraries on Tuesday, June 25, 2024, at the Holiday Inn Bayside hotel in San Diego.

Members of the 2024 Fanny Goldstein Merit Award committee are Rachel Leket-Mor (chair), Daniel Scheide, and Aviva Rosenberg.

About the Association of Jewish Libraries

The Association of Jewish Libraries, the leading authority on Judaic librarianship, is an international, professional organization that fosters access to information and research in all forms of media relating to all things Jewish. The Association promotes Jewish literacy and scholarship and provides a community for peer support and professional development. For more information, visit www.jewishlibraries.org.

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