Living in South America: Hochschule fur Wissenschaft des Judentums and Its Legacy

Irene Munster

Description: The great majority of Central European exiles – numbering between 50,000 and 90,000 - arrived in South America after 1933. The network of religious, cultural and educational institutions they generated impacted the local Jewish communities, as well as the host countries’ culture. Although there are partial studies on this immigration and its effects on the subcontinent, many aspects, such as the impact of the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums students and staff have not yet been fully addressed. The purpose of this presentation is to introduce some of these individuals, the work of CENTRA and its influence in the creation and development of the only Jewish research library in South America.

Irene Munster, born in Argentina, served as Library Director of the Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano (Latin American Rabbinical Seminary) and later as Library Director at the Max von Buch Library, at the Universidad de San Andrés. In the U.S., she was the Bibliographer for Latin America & Iberia and the first Jewish Studies librarian at Duke University, and Chief of Libraries at the InterAmerican Development Bank. Currently, she serves as Library Director of the Priddy Library, a branch of the University of Maryland Libraries. Her research interests focus on Jewish immigration to South American countries and the preservation of memory, with an emphasis on Jewish libraries and booksellers.