FRESHMAN SEMINAR: AN INTRODUCTION TO JUDAICA LIBRARIANSHIP, PART I: INTRODUCTION AND BASIC VOCABULARY IN LIBRARIANSHIP

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Description: Need help organizing your library? Feeling overwhelmed? The Freshman Seminar can help! For the first time, new and inexperienced librarians and volunteer staff can learn the basics of Judaic librarianship from experts in the field. The seminar is designed to provide participants with a solid start in organizing their libraries in a professional way. Join us for the first session in this four-part series.

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The Goal of the Freshman Seminar

It has become apparent that many people who are staffing Judaic libraries have little or no library training or experience. They are anxious for guidance. They are turning to local librarians for help and are posting questions on the AJL list serve, HaSafran. They often feel daunted and overwhelmed. The Freshman Seminar is designed to provide inexperienced library personnel with the knowledge and the tools needed to organize and operate their libraries. The Freshman Seminar is divided into four consecutive sessions: "Introduction & Basic Vocabulary in Librarianship," "Classification, Cataloging, and Automation," "Collection Development," and "Library Administration and Management." However, the Freshman Seminar cannot tell you everything you need to know. Our goal is for this to be a foundation and a starting block for you to begin your journey of organizing your library in a professional way. We hope to expose you to some of the vocabulary, terminology, and resources, and to introduce you to some of the people in AJL who are experts in the different areas of Judaica librarianship. You will not get the answers to all of your questions, but a list of presenters is included and all of these people are willing to help you. Please do not hesitate to contact them by e-mail or phone if you have any further questions.

A Library vs. A Room Full of Books

Check the box in each row that applies to your institution. The left column includes characteristics of a library. The right column includes characteristics of a room with reading and viewing materials. Which column best describes your institution? Which column do you want your institution to fit into?

LIBRARY	ROOM WITH READING MATERIALS
☐ Has established policies and procedures	☐ Is very informal; functions casually and "off the cuff"
☐ Managed by a professional librarian, at least part-time; if the librarian is not professionally trained she/he is recognized by the institution as the person in charge	☐ Staffed by volunteers and aides; no management is evident
☐ Materials are acquired in an orderly and rational manner and further the library's mission and goals	☐ The collections consists mainly of gifts; acquired randomly with no particular purpose or over-arching scheme
☐ A professionally recognized classification system is consistently applied to all materials and materials are organized to facilitate bibliographic access and retrieval	☐ Little or no classification and cataloging; a simple organizational scheme such as alphabetization is used
☐ Has a system for circulating materials	☐ Materials are circulated on the "honor system"
☐ Has an annual budget	☐ Depends on gifts or small, occasional institutional subsidies
☐ Has a dedicated space	☐ Library operations may be interrupted or curtailed when space is needed for other purposes

It is perfectly fine if your institution falls in the category of "Room Full of Books." You just have to recognize that that's what you are. You might decide that a "Room Full of Books," or a "Reading Room" or "Reading Center," is what is right for your institution. However if your institution wants a truly functioning library, you have to meet the above requirements.

Whether you are establishing a library or a space with a collection of reading materials in it, the following must also be considered:

• What is the purpose of your endeavor? Who will it serve? Why is it being established? From these questions will come a **mission statement**. You need to have a mission statement to define what your library is going to be. For example, are you going to collect fiction books written by Jewish authors, but have no Jewish content? Will you purchase, for example, *Memoirs of A Geisha* just because the author is Jewish? There's no right or wrong answer, but you have to decide your position and you have to have it written down in your policies.

- What will it consist of in terms of the depth and breadth of the collection and the types of materials it will have in it? From this will emerge a **collection development policy**, which includes procedures for accepting and rejecting gifts. Just because someone donates a book to the library doesn't mean you have to add it to the library collection. Even if it's free! If you wouldn't go out and purchase the item for the library because it doesn't meet your collection development goals, then it doesn't matter if someone is willing to give it to the library for free. If it is not furthering your library's mission than you don't need it. But you have to have a policy that spells out your procedures. If someone donates a book to the library does it become a permanent part of the collection? You need a policy in place that allows you to withdraw, de-select, and dispose of materials that are no longer needed, even if they were gifts or donations.

- Who will manage the library and provide services? From this will come **staffing requirements** and **job descriptions**. Every person employed in your institution, no matter how small, has a job description—the secretary who answers the phones has a job description, the Rabbi has a job description, the principal has a job description, and the maintenance person has a job description. The librarian needs a job description too! None of us have enough hours in the day, whether we are working full-time or part-time, to accomplish what is needed, therefore you need to have a job description so that you are not wasting your time on things that somebody else in your institution is better able or suited to do.

- What **annual budget** will be needed for start-up costs and on-going expenditures, including staff salaries? You cannot have a functioning library that exists solely on donations. Even if the majority of your funding is coming from donations you have to know that every year you can count on a minimum amount of funding from the institution.

- What will be circulated (loaned), to whom, for how long? From this will come a **circulation policy**.

- What will be the library's **operational procedures**: what hours will it be open, how will it be staffed in terms of professional and clerical responsibilities, how will its materials be organized?

10 Essential Questions

In addition, the following questions need to be answered for an institution to support a library or a room with reading materials:

1. Who are the primary users? Who are the other (secondary) users?

For example, students, faculty/teachers, parents, senior citizens, the general public, members of the Jewish community, rabbis, cantors, and staff. You need to decide who your users are. If you are in school maybe your users are only going to be the students, the parents, the rabbis, and the staff of your school. Who are the most important people that you are designing and developing your library for? For example, in a synagogue library you might decide that the primary users of your library are your congregants, the rabbis, and the synagogue staff. In the process your

library may also be able to serve the general public and other members of the community, but these are your secondary users, not your primary users.

2. What types of materials will be available?

For example, fiction books, non-fiction books, children's books, reference material, audio-books, music cassettes and CDs, videos, websites, periodicals, databases, puzzles, games, toys, posters, maps, computer software, etc. Also, what languages will your material be in? Will you have only English language materials, or will your collection also include material in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, or other languages? Will all types of material be circulating? For instance, will you allow patrons to checkout computer software, puzzles, and games? There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, however, it is important that your institution decides what types of materials will be purchased and acquired.

3. What space is available? Is the space sufficient to house the desired materials? What are the space requirements?

The size of your space is going to affect your decisions on what types of users you are going to serve and what types of materials you will collect. On the flip side, the types of users you would like to serve and the types of materials you would like to collect will affect the amount of space needed. Also, is the library a dedicated space or will library operations be interrupted or curtailed when space is needed for other purposes? While we all have to deal with sharing our space, will the space sharing interrupt library use? You may encourage groups within your institution to hold meetings or classes in the library to expose and introduce people to the library, but you have to have control over the space so that the library does not have to stop being a library when someone else wants to utilize it.

4. What materials and services are available from local public libraries, synagogue libraries, day school, or community libraries? What materials and services do not need to be duplicated by your institution?

For example, if the public library has copies of popular "main-stream" titles, then you might not need to purchase them for your library. If a patron requests it you can refer them to the local public library. Another example is back-issues of periodicals. Almost all of the periodicals that we collect in our libraries are available (and easily accessible) on microfilm at public and/or academic institutions, so you may not need to waste storage or shelf space maintaining back-issues. Or, for instance, the congregation down the street received a large donation to purchase Jewish audio books. Assuming you have a reciprocal relation with them, you may not need to collect Jewish audio books because you can refer your patrons to another local congregation. You have to make decisions about your collection development based on what is available in your community and based on the needs of your users. It is essential to know what other libraries are collecting both in the Jewish community and in your community at large. We can't be everything to everyone!

5. How will materials be acquired?

If purchased new, what is the annual budget? Who will select the materials? Who will order, label, process, and catalog the material? Is the Rabbi selecting the books for the library or is the librarian? Who gets to recommend books to be purchased? If somebody recommends a book does the library have to purchase it? If materials are acquired by donation, who will decide what to keep and what to discard? What will be done to dispose of unwanted materials? A donor agreement is recommended so that all donors understand that donated material becomes the sole property of the library and that the library can decide to de-select, withdraw, or remove it from the collection at any time.

6. How will the collection of materials be organized so that people can find what they are looking for?

Will you use one of the Judaica classification systems like Weine or Elazar or will the material be organized in some other way?

7. How will materials be checked in and out?

If the library is not automated there needs to be a procedure for circulation like sign out cards. Also, how will missing titles be identified and located?

8. How will borrowers find the materials they want?

Signage? Card catalog? Shelf list? Map of the library? Who (or what) will be there to help borrowers find the materials they want?

9. When will the library be open? When will the library be staffed? Who will train the volunteers?

10. Who will be responsible for ordering equipment and supplies, including those needed on an on-going basis?

Who is in charge of requesting or ordering other needed supplies such as staples, paper clips, pens, pencils, paper, etc.?

If there is institutional support for a functioning library, the following additional issues need to be addressed:

• **Develop a job description for a salaried, professional (MLS) librarian, at least part-time.**

• **Gain approval for a yearly library budget from institutional operating funds.**

• **Institute a dedicated space for the library.**

Tips for Starting a New Library

1.   Form a library committee consisting of institutional decision-makers, volunteers, and residents. Meaningful planning requires the participation of stakeholders; plans should be made by consensus to ensure support. You can't make these decisions by yourself. You need input from the library supporters and the library patrons to answer all of these questions and address all of these issues.

2.   In addition to getting advice about space planning from the project architect, sales representatives from library furnishing and equipment vendors will estimate shelving and seating needs and show you what is available.

3.   The current average price of an adult hardcover book is $23 for fiction and $52 for non-fiction. Adult paperbacks average $14 for fiction and $25 for non-fiction. Hardcover children's fiction averages $15; children's non-fiction is $21. Children's paperbacks average $9. Keep these figures in mind when determining your book budget. Also, be sure to include allocations for supplies (stamps, pockets, cards, labels, office supplies, etc.), subscriptions, professional dues, photocopying and mailing costs, programs, professional development (local and national conferences and workshops), and other expenses in the budget.

4.   Become a member of the Association of Jewish Libraries and get involved with your local chapter, if available. Yearly AJL dues for at least one staff member should be written into the budget and covered by the institution. Request that your institution play for all or part of your expenses to attend AJL Conventions each year or every-other year. Also request institutional funds to allow you to take advantage of professional development opportunities in the general library field like state library association workshops and conference. Insists that these expenses be written into your contract or into the library budget so that you do not have to ask for the funding every year. Your institution needs to understand that professional development will enable you to be a better, more educated, knowledgeable, and professional librarian and this will insure a higher quality of library services. Visit the AJL website at www.jewishlibraries.org for membership information, a list of AJL publications, the AJL Bibliography Bank, Chapter contact information, and more!

5.   Download the AJL Accreditation applications from the website. Make Accreditation a goal for your library.

This concludes Part I of the 2002 Freshman Seminar, sponsored by the AJL Professional Development and Continuing Education Committee. Refer to the other three parts for more information on classification, cataloging, automation, collection development, and library administration and management. For more information, contact Rachel Erlich Kamin at TILibrary@aol.com

Portions of this session were adapted from *Starting A New Library: Issues and Questions to Help You Get Started*, developed by the Association of Jewish Libraries, Greater Cleveland Chapter.