

# Adult Book Acquisition

by Cheryl Banks

**Description:** How do I decide what materials to purchase for the library? How can I get more people to visit my library? The second session of the Freshman Seminar II session will focus on developing an adult collection as well as programs and outreach activities that will bring adults into your library. Attendance at the 2002 Freshman Seminar is not required. Participants in the Freshman Seminar II are encouraged to attend all 4 sessions on Monday, but everyone is welcome to attend individual sessions.

**Cheryl Banks**, M.A. is the director of the Gray Cultural and Learning Center of North Suburban Synagogue Beth El in Highland Park, Illinois. A past president of the Judaica Library Network of Metropolitan Chicago, and a co-chair of the Association of Jewish Libraries international convention in Chicago, Ms. Banks was also the secretary of the SSC Division of AJL, past member of the Sydney Taylor Book Awards Committee, past member of the Accreditation Committee, and is past-president of the SSC Division of AJL. She is currently the National Convention Committee Co-Chair of AJL.

We, as Judaica librarians, are in charge of the repositories of Jewish literature and writing. Therefore, we have an obligation to responsibly acquire and manage books for the Jewish community. Given today's budgetary and bureaucratic obstacles, however, developing an adult collection is a often a complex task. This session is designed to clarify the steps in determining how to decide what materials

to purchase for the library.

The first task of the librarian is to set goals and establish obtainable objectives. This takes time and requires addressing various aspects of institutional management, for example, doing a "needs assessment," understanding the rules of the synagogue or school, and understanding the position of the librarian in the institution (i.e. how much authority) vis a vis the other professionals.

## I. Initial Planning Phases

A. Perform a needs assessment, i.e., what are the needs of the facility? What is the size of the space? Are you starting a library with an empty room and an unlimited budget? Do you have cartons of donated books? Is your library going to be sustained by only a gift fund? Sometimes libraries are built around personal collections e.g. a large collection of donated Yiddish books, or art books – if so, purchases may be restricted.

B. Is there a restriction on the number of books that will be part of the collection? Quantity restrictions are dependent upon the size of the space (space can be assisted by weeding [see below]\*.) and upon the budget.

C. Who will the borrower/user be? What will the library be used for? Will it be, mainly, a resource for the rabbi or teachers? Will it be used for research? For pleasure reading? For retirees or young parents? Who is the audience? Always be mindful of the borrower, and certainly, of the rabbi and teachers in the institution.

D. Consider, also, working with other professionals in the Institution – Rabbi, Religious School Director, Board of Directors, Bookkeeper, Library Committee.

E. Content decisions: what types of books will be included in the library?

1. How do I define fiction, e.g. Jewish authors or Jewish content? (Jonathan Kellerman vs. Faye Kellerman?)
2. Will the library include books that implicitly accept intermarriage? Or

books that are about “Jewish Buddhism?”

3. What are the rules of the synagogue or school? Is it Conservative, Orthodox, Reform? What is the Jewish orientation of the institution, the Zionist orientation, the interest in potentially sensitive issues (abortion, homosexuality), crisis (death), etc.

F. What influence does the Library Committee have on acquisitions? Will they restrict the number of fiction vs. non-fiction? Will they allow a Palestinian book, or even a “liberal” bent about Israel? Will the librarian have final say, or will there be lay or rabbinic “censorship?”

G. Who has acquisitions authority, i.e. who makes the decision: the librarian, the library committee, the rabbi, the board of directors?

H. Be sure to consider the activities of the institution, curricula (for parents), Social Action, Rabbinic, Hebrew School requirements, Adult ed. when determining additions to the library collection.

I. And finally, and most profoundly, determine what, for your institution, constitutes Judaica? Books about Sigmund Freud? By Sigmund Freud? Woody Allen? Death, Divorce, Intermarriage? Madeline Albright (i.e. someone who found out late in life that they had Jewish roots)?

J. If you only have gift funds, it is more tentative – makes planning difficult

K. Set policies about used materials: do we accept used materials?

L. What is our budget?

## **II. What should the library own?**

A. After you’ve determined “How Many?” (according to library board, or budget, or rabbi) question then is WHAT? to buy.

B. Map your collection, into a) basic collection needs – for breadth – overviews, etc. b) General emphasis, for intermediate depth. c) Specific emphasis

C. Jewish values and content must be the foundation.

After all of the above, considering your selection process, your selection criteria, the donations, and a budget,

**BE PREPARED TO DEFEND YOUR COLLECTION – COVER CENSORSHIP AND INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM POLICIES IN YOUR DEVELOPMENT POLICY, SO THAT YOU HAVE A PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW WHEN THERE’S A COMPLAINT**

### III. \*Weeding Policy

- A. Space can be assisted by weeding. Therefore, there needs to be a policy – weeding is to get rid of outdated books, or those in poor physical condition, those that are no longer relevant, those in poor quality, or duplicates. But it is very tricky.

**GENERALLY ITEMS RETAINED IN A JUDAIC LIBRARY ARE RETAINED LONGER THAN IS STANDARD, BECAUSE JUDAICA MATERIALS ARE PRODUCED IN LESSER QUANTITIES, AND GO OUT OF PRINT QUICKLY. – THEY ARE, THEREFORE, IRREPLACEABLE**

- B. Weeding is determined, also, by the scope of your library
- C. Consider: Is the book a classic, and therefore, should be kept?
- D. What is its past history of circulation?
- E. Is the book just plain worn out?

### IV. The Collection

There are basic books that every Jewish library should have (Appendix i). Plus: Periodicals, Books on Tape, Audio Tapes, CD's, Videos, DVD's.

Examples of critical genres are below:

Fiction

Books about Israel

Short story collections, fables, midrash

Non-fiction:

Reference (function of money and space)

History – Ancient, medieval, modern, Holocaust, American

Israel

Biography

Holidays

Customs

Esoteric: Mysticism, cookbooks, sociology, Inspirational (when bad things happen)

### V. Purchasing/Sources of Materials

- A. Utilize AJL resources, reviews, internet resources and networking for information about what to purchase
- B. See attached for lists of review sources (appendix ii)
- C. See appendix iii – v for purchasing resources

**FRESHMAN SEMINAR II:  
MORE INFORMATION  
ON THE  
FUNDAMENTALS  
OF  
JUDAICA LIBRARIANSHIP**

**DEVELOPING AN ADULT COLLECTION**

**JUNE, 2003**

by

**CHERYL BANKS  
North Suburban Synagogue Beth El  
Highland Park, Illinois**

## Appendix i

### **Suggestions for Adult Collection Acquisition (in my recommended order of importance)**

*Tanakh, Torah, Haftarah* + basic commentaries

Basic Judaism -- Encyclopedias

Holidays

Customs and Ceremonies, Kashrut

Life Cycle, Marriage, Divorce, Parenting, Mourning

History

Israel

Holocaust

Biography

Prayer

Rabbinic Literature, Midrashim

Literature (see fiction)

Inspirational, comfort

Ethics

Halacha

Women

Anti-Semitism

Philosophy

Hebrew Language

Yiddish Language

Talmud

Art, Calligraphy, Arts and Crafts

Cookbooks

Music

Jews in Sports

Education (for teachers)

Travel

Archaeology

Less critical for a basic collection: Mysticism, Kabbalah, Hasidism, Sociology, Literary Criticism, Sports, Architecture, Comparative Religion (Islam is very popular now).

Fiction: Novels, Short Stories, Poetry, Essays, Drama,  
Humor

Important Authors:

S.Y. Agnon

Shalom Aleichem

Yehuda Amichai

Aharon Appelfeld

Sholem Asch

Isaac Babel

Saul Bellow

Rebecca Goldstein

Allegra Goodman

Noah Gordon

David Grossman

Batya Gur

Shulamith Hareven

Irving Howe

Faye Kellerman

Rochelle Krich

Primo Levi

Meyer Levin

Bernard Malamud

Amos Oz

Cynthia Ozick

Y.L. Peretz

Chaim Potok

Naomi Ragen

Anne Roiphe

Philip Roth

Meir Shalev

I.B. Singer

Leon Uris  
Elie Wiesel  
Herman Wouk  
A.B. Yehoshua

*Appendix ii*

**Book Reviews and Bibliography Advice**

*Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter*

**Association of Jewish Libraries homepage**

**[www.jewishlibraries.org](http://www.jewishlibraries.org)**

**Bibliography Bank – Association of Jewish Libraries (web site)**

*Booklist Magazine*

**HaSafran listserv [hasafran@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu](mailto:hasafran@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu)**

**Jewish Book Council 1-212-532-4949**

**[www.jewishbookcouncil.org](http://www.jewishbookcouncil.org)**

**(Includes *Jewish Book Annual*)**

**Jewish Women's Resource Center 1-212-687-5030**

**[www.ncjwny.org](http://www.ncjwny.org)**

*Publisher's Weekly*

*New York Times Book Review*

**Jewish Periodicals, e.g. *Hadassah Magazine, Moment, The Forward, Commentary, etc.***



*Appendix iii*

Partial List of Book, Video and Audio Suppliers

**Anti-Defamation League** [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org) 1-800-343-5540

ARE Publishing [www.arepublish.com](http://www.arepublish.com) 1-800-346-7779

**Artscroll Publishers** [www.artscroll.com](http://www.artscroll.com) 1-800-637-6724

**Baker and Taylor Books** [www.btol.com](http://www.btol.com) 1-800-775-3700

**Eichler's** [www.eichlers.com](http://www.eichlers.com) 1-888-342-4537

**Ergo Media** [www.jewishvideo.com](http://www.jewishvideo.com) 1-877-539-4748

**Facets Multimedia** [www.facets.org](http://www.facets.org) 1-773-281-9075

**Index to Jewish Periodicals** [www.jewishperiodicals.com](http://www.jewishperiodicals.com) 1-216-381-4846

**Jewish Publication Society** [www.jewishpub.org](http://www.jewishpub.org) 1-800-234-3151

**Jewish Contemporary Classics Audio Books**

[www.jccaudiobooks.com](http://www.jccaudiobooks.com)

1-877-JCC-TAPE

**Kar-Ben Copies, Inc.** [www.karben.com](http://www.karben.com) 1-800-4KarBen

**Rosenblum's World of Judaica** [www.rosenblums.com](http://www.rosenblums.com) 1-800-626-6536

**Tara Publications** [www.jewishmusic.com](http://www.jewishmusic.com) 1-800-827-2400

**Torah Aura Productions** [www.torahaura.com](http://www.torahaura.com) 1-800-Be-Torah

**UAHC Publications** [www.uahc.org](http://www.uahc.org) 1-888-489-8242

**United Synagogue Book Service** [www.uscj.org](http://www.uscj.org) 1-212-533-7800

**U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum** [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) 1-800-259-9998

## Appendix iv

### WEB SITES OF BOOK VENDORS

**Amazon.com**

**BarnesandNoble.com**

**Borders.com**

**JewishBookmall.com**

**jewishbooksonline.co.uk**

**judaicapress.com**

**Judaism.com**

**milechai.com**

**myjewishbooks.com**

**e-shul.com**

**yiddishbookcenter.org**

*Appendix v*

LIBRARY SUPPLIES

**Demco [www.demco.com](http://www.demco.com) 1-800-279-1586**

**Highsmith Library Supplies [www.highsmith.com](http://www.highsmith.com) 1-800-558-2110**

**The Library Store, Inc. [www.thelibrarystore.com](http://www.thelibrarystore.com) 1-800-548-7204**

**The Learning Plant [www.learningplant.com](http://www.learningplant.com) 1-561-686-9456**

**Brodart [www.brodart.com](http://www.brodart.com) 1-888-820-4377 (supplies)  
1-800-233-8467 (books)**