

**Freshman Seminar:
An Introduction to Judaica Librarianship, Part II:
Classification, Cataloging & Automation**

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Description: This session of the Freshman Seminar II will include an explanation of the MARC record and an overview of the different classification systems for a Judaic library (Library of Congress, Dewey, Weine, and Elazar). Participants will have the opportunity to do some hands-on cataloging of actual books and figure out where they would catalog them in their own 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.

Rachel K. Glasser is currently the librarian at Yavneh Academy in Paramus, New Jersey, a modern Orthodox elementary day school of 825 students. She has taught cataloging classes, given professional workshops in various areas of librarianship, published bibliographies, and assisted in the revision of the Elazar and Wine cataloging schemes. She is the founding cataloger of the Central Cataloging Systems for Libraries of Judaica of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, California, where she worked as a Judaica reference librarian and cataloger for 13 years. She received the Dorothy Schroeder Award for Dedication to Judaic Librarianship from AJLSC. She currently serves on the Accreditation Committee and is the chair of the Sydney Taylor Manuscript Committee.

This is not a short course in how to catalog, but rather an explanation of some of the issues, problems, and considerations that you, as librarians should take into account when cataloging and organizing your collection. Then, you can evaluate your options and make an informed decision as to which direction your library should take – whether it be revising an existing system, setting up a new collection, or upgrading your standards.

Is cataloging an art or a science? It is truly a combination of both. One uses professional tools with exact rules and standardized codes, but also brings in his/her own philosophy, prejudices, educational background, and experience. It must be inclusive, comprehensive, systematic, flexible, and expansive. It may seem quite amusing to us, but medieval libraries arranged their books according to size, while others arranged them by color. Our goal is to bring together materials on the same subject and show the relationship between the subjects. Most schemes begin with a philosophical division of human knowledge and then build on it. The goal is to organize knowledge into a systematic order and provide direction for the patron. In simple terms, a classification scheme assigns an address for the book or item, while subject headings expand that area to provide greater access.

Cataloging is a subjective process with the patron taking precedence. Standards must be followed whenever possible, but often times local usage wins out. Consider computers and shared cataloging before changes are made. For example, a special collection of books on values and middot in a certain library will not be useful in another. In addition, the use of a visible symbol on a book spine (a colored dot, “mystery” symbol, etc.) must be easily translated into a computer notation so that special collections are visible in the library.

An item is generally classified by its main subject, and then the form in which the subject is represented. If it contains more than three subjects, use a general area or term. If there are two subjects and neither is prominent, use the first subject presented. It is important to determine the intent of the author. Various parts of the book should be examined to gain as much information as possible. They include: the cover, title page and verso, CIP data, introduction and preface, bibliography, book jacket, illustrations, index, and glossary. In addition, the cataloger should read the first few pages to determine level of comprehension and language difficulty.

Issues

There are numerous philosophical issues concerning the placement of books in a classification scheme, which should be considered. Decisions must be rooted in the fundamentals of the field it seeks to organize. Most important of all, decisions must be recorded, documented, and followed consistently. Some of these include:

1. Fiction vs. literature.
2. Biography vs. subject area
3. Holiday fiction (children) vs. number for the holiday
4. Open stacks vs. closed stacks
5. Genre vs. subject
 - i.e. Holocaust poetry places in Holocaust or poetry
6. Level of ages and reading ability – fiction and non-fiction sections for juvenile, easy readers, picture books, intermediate, young adult
7. Controversial materials
 - i.e. Holocaust denial, art books with photos

Why use a Judaic Classification Scheme?

In a Jewish library, the majority of our collection includes Judica, although all of our items are not “religion.” Using a Judaic scheme provides greater flexibility and expansion possibilities. It is usually easier for patrons to find items, especially in a day school setting where the synthesis of general and Judaic studies encompasses both the curriculum and daily lives of the students.

Weine Classification Scheme for Judaic Libraries

The Wine scheme was originally based on Dewey and intended to be intershelved in day school libraries. It is based on the hierarchy of Jewish life. It is distinguished from Dewey through the use of a small “z” before each number. While it was originally intended for small libraries of 5,000 items and less, it has been expanded and is now used for collections of 15,000 and more. It was revised several years ago by the Cataloging Committee of the SSC division of AJL and is available through AJL Publications along with a revised index and subject heading list.

Dewey Decimal Classification

Dewey is divided into ten classes of major areas, which divide all human knowledge. Each class is then divided into ten sub-divisions or sub-classes. The scheme allows for infinite expansion through number building, although this is generally not practical for children’s books with thin spines. All Dewey numbers are a minimum of three digits. Dewey is appropriate for all general studies materials and is used almost exclusively in public libraries.

Subject Headings

Subject headings are used to provide greater access to the item and expand the use of the item being cataloged. The most important aspect in using subject headings is consistency. A catalog, whether on-line or cards, will be useful only when the patron can readily access subject headings. In order to maintain consistency, an authority file must be established noting the issues, rationale, and decisions. It can be created as a card file, loose leaf, online database, or within an existing subject heading listing. The authority must be established for terms, names, and dates. Some important issues to consider concerning subject headings include:

1. Language – English or Hebrew terms: Passover or Pesach
Ashkenazic or Sephardic terms: Shabbos or Shabbat
2. Spelling – English: Hanukkah, Chanukah, Hannukah, etc.
Hebrew: Berit Milah, Brit Milah, Berith Milah, Bris, Briss

Cross-references should be added to the catalog to help both the patron and cataloger. They will be useful for issues of spelling as well as directing the patron from unused terms to used terms and from the general to the specific.

- i.e. Moses Ben Maimon see MAIMONIDES
Chanukah see HANUKKAH
Circumcision see BRIT MILAH

Free-floating subdivisions can be added to any heading to expand its usage. Some of these include: --fiction, --collections, --poetry, --geographical locations. The use of computers has allowed us to expand our cataloging capabilities. Fewer headings used to be assigned to an item since each catalog card was hand typed. Now, we can add, correct, or delete headings easily while allowing for maximum access to the item.

Many libraries purchase their books already cataloged and processed for time and efficiency. These services vary in price and extent and allow the librarian to have more time for assisting patrons, acquisitions, and the general administration of the library. However, it is still very important for the librarian to understand the basic concepts and issues of cataloging, and even more so in a school library where there are often many specialized collections.

TOOLS FOR JUDAIC CATALOGING
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*Bella Hass Weinberg gave me this additional resource upon conclusion of my presentation.