Ongoing archival and library work
Nidhe Israel Synagogue and Museum
Bridgetown, Barbados

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Association of Jewish Libraries conference
Charleston, June 2016
Overview

• PART I: Brief history of the Jewish presence in Barbados

• PART II: The Barbados Synagogue Restoration Project (BSRP)
  * Synagogue * Cemetery * Museum * Mikveh * Synagogue block

• PART III: Digitizing and processing the BSRP records

• PART IV: Future archival/library work
After the Expulsion, to Western Europe and the New World...
1654: From Dutch Brazil to Barbados, Jamaica, New York, or back to Amsterdam...
The Jews of Barbados: A small, but influential community

- Sephardic ethnic ties
- Family kinship ties
- Global trading networks
Barbados
1627: Colonized by the English
1654: A synagogue already in place
Kahal Kadosh Nidhe Israel Synagogue and Cemetery

‘The Scattered of Israel’
1929 – The end of the Sephardic community

Exterior and interior of the synagogue just before its sale.
1932-New beginnings:
Ashkenazi Jews arrive in Barbados
Barbados Synagogue Restoration Project
Est. 1985
Synagogue and cemetery restored
Nidhe Israel Museum
Archaeological excavations and Mikveh
Some highlights:

• Extension of the Jewish cemetery
• Social hall for the community
• Restoration of surrounding historic buildings and adaptive reuse
• ‘Green park’ for cars
• Art gallery, café, shops
• Restoration of the old Fire House
• Commemorative Emancipation monument
• Enhancement of surrounding pedestrian area
PROCESSING THE BSRP RECORDS
PHASE I (current)

Processing and digitization of the collection

Selective transfer to Barbados Department of Archives (physical records)

Selective uploading online (material of “archival value”)
DIGITAL PRESERVATION CHALLENGES

• Hosting
• Ensuring continuing accessibility
• Climate
• Hardware/software obsoletion
• Migration of digital objects
• Staffing issues
• Trustworthiness of commercial providers
• Linkability of the collection to other institutions abroad
DISPOSITION OF RECORDS

- BSRP collection
  - Physical records
    - Barbados Department of Archives
      - (copies)
  - Digital surrogates
    - BSRP server
      - Archival
      - Business
    - Digital Library of the Caribbean

- Museum library
ARRANGEMENT

...Reflects BSRP activities.

**Collection**  BSRP records

**Sub-collections**  Phases of activities

**Series**  Distinct categories of activities under each phase

**File**  One activity of a specific category

For BSRP internal purposes

- Arrangement of electronic surrogates follows physical arrangement
• Finding aid
  • Description at the file level
  • Occasionally at the item level (e.g., photos)

• For BSRP internal purposes
  • Meaningful, consistent naming of digital files

• For dLOC purposes
  • Template provided for importing metadata
  • Description at the item level with basic metadata
Digitization specifications

COLOR
• Black & White items: 8-bit grayscale
• Items with meaningful color: 24-bit RGB

RESOLUTION
• B&W (text): 300 dpi
• Color (images): 600 dpi

FILE TYPE
• Uncompressed TIFFs
PHASE II

CEMETERY:
• Convert analog records to digital formats
• Create database
  • Map
  • Tombstones
  • Inscriptions
  • Iconography

MIKVEH:
• Consolidate archaeological dig data
  • Already in database during excavations
PHASE III  
(through grants)

• Create datasets with data from ‘Jewish’ archival material on the island

• Augment by adding name authority records and geographical Linked Open Data

• Link to collections abroad (i.e., US archives and libraries, Judaica Europeana etc.)
SAMPLE DATA

PERSON

Grave
- Location (on cemetery map)
- Measurements/condition of gravestone
- Name of deceased
- Dates (birth-death)
- Name of spouse or parents
- Profession (sometimes)
- Cause of death (sometimes)
- Iconography

Will
- Name
- City (of birth, domicile, and/or destination)
- Dates
- Relatives
- Witnesses
- “Possessions” bequeathed
  - Objects (things, clothes...)
  - Money
  - Properties with location
  - Slaves (named, unnamed, some with family relationships)

House
- Location in the city
- Location compared to other houses
- Property value
- Property tax
- Size
PHASE IV
(through grants)

• Make available these datasets to researchers for possible digital humanities projects

• Mobile applications
  • E.g., heritage tour of the “Jew Street” in Bridgetown and places they lived

• Augmented reality applications
  • E.g., superimposing information about a person or his/her will over their tomb that people can “see” with their mobile devices
THANK YOU!

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