The modern library: The University of Michigan’s Jewish Heritage Collection as a model of innovation and integration

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Jewish Heritage Collection

-Housed within Special Collections at the Hatcher Graduate Library on the University of Michigan campus

-Curated by Elliot H. Gertel

-Carefully crafted and collected over several decades by Constance and Theodore Harris of Beverly Hills, California

-Gradually gifted to the University Library and the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies beginning in 2003
Types of materials within the collection
A collection that embraces the senses
Size

Very small

Very large
Age

Old

New
Rarity

Rare or Unique

Common
Great, but what now?
Traditional Library materials

- Most straightforward of materials in the JHC
- Cataloged using AACR2 or RDA
- Given LC call numbers
Objects/Realia - Intellectual organization

- Analyzed, researched, and described
- Metadata entered into a spreadsheet
- JHC-R#### given for the items
- Processing photograph taken

Spreadsheet categories include:

- JHC ID
- Title
- Description
- Languages
- Material
- Creator
- Geographic Origin
- Date (earliest and latest)
- Value
- Price
- Date Added
- Donor/Source
- Location in Collection
- Exhibit Usage
Objects/Realia - Intellectual organization

- Desire to keep make similar or related items findable to researchers
- Formerly asked to use AAT or LCSH
- Insufficient for such a collection
- Ultimately used the Judaica Europeana schema with modifications
- Provided subject-specificity and flexibility necessary for this collection
- Allows room to grow

http://www.judaica-europeana.eu/Search_Europeana_Collections_with_Judaic_categories.html
Objects/Realia - Physical organization

- Custom-made housings created to ensure protection of items
Artwork/Graphics - Intellectual organization

- Analyzed, researched, and described
- Metadata entered into a spreadsheet
- JHC-G#### given for the items
- Processing photograph taken

Spreadsheet categories include:

- JHC ID
- Title (if created, in [])
- Description
- Artwork Type
- Main subject
- Material
- Languages
- Geographic Origin
- Date (earliest and latest)
- Size
- Condition
- Value/Price
- Date Added
- Donor Source
Artwork/Graphics - Physical organization

- Varies depending on possible exhibition needs and budget constraints
- Some works matted, others in folders
- Some previously housed in inappropriate housings, working to remove damaging materials
- Large backlog of these items
Ephemera- Intellectual organization

- Analyzed, researched, and described
- Metadata entered into a spreadsheet
- JHC-E#### given for the items
- Processing photograph taken
Great, but what now?
Exhibits and Showings
In place before I began this phase of work on the JHC

Difficult to use, discover items

Currently unimproved metadata with many errors, categorized using AAT

Does provide digital images of some items = better than nothing
Jewish Heritage Collection LibGuide

- Increases the visibility of the JHC to potential users and researchers throughout the globe
- Attracts users of all backgrounds and levels of Judaic knowledge
- Provides an easy way to navigate materials available in the digital archive and encourage in-person visits to the library

http://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=302711
And why is this a model of innovation and integration?

The JHC is an example of a modern library that cherishes the physical artifacts while also embracing technology.

Technology can add an additional dimension and make the collection even more rich and valuable to the institution.
And why is this a model of innovation and integration?

The JHC and the manner in which it is being processed is breaking down the walls amongst libraries, museums, and archives.

We have taken the best from each field, retaining standards, and thinking of patrons first.

- Can be seen as another manifestation of diversity.
- Removing these barriers can help researchers see the whole picture.
- The variety of materials in a collection like the JHC can inspire users in ways that may not even be anticipated by a collection’s creator, curator, or institution.
Thank you!

LibGuide: http://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=302711

Digital Archive: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/s/sclharris