Polish Prints & Imprints
Fall Conference Features
Distinguished Bibliographer
by Liza Stabler,
Librarian, Temple Emanu-El

In a word, "Hebrew Printing in Poland: an Historical Overview" can be called a legacy. The topic of the Fall Conference, held November 11, 2002, at the Center for Jewish History, covered the gamut of Jewish publishing in Poland, from its humble beginnings to its tragic end. Because of Poland's seminal position in the history of Hebrew printing, the conference proved of great interest to librarians from all branches of the field - academic and special, as well as school and synagogue. In addition, there were simply those whose ancestors hailed from that part of the world, and who wanted to learn more about a vanished era.

Impressive History
The featured speaker, Brad Sabin Hill, was recently appointed Dean of the Library and Senior Research Librarian at YIVO. Dr. Hill has brought with him an impressive list of credentials: former Librarian and Fellow in Hebrew Bibliography at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, and member of the Faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford; he had previously served as Head of the Hebrew Section of the Oriental Collections at the British library in London, and Curator of Hebrew in the Rare Books Division of the National Library of Canada in Ottawa.

Dr. Hill graduated in Classics from Brown University, and also studied at Yeshiva and McGill Universities. His work includes a number of books and articles on Hebrew bibliography. He edited a volume of Hebrew bibliographical studies in 1995, and in 1996 authored a study of Hebrew deluxe printing on vellum, both published by the British Library. In addition, he curated the exhibitions and prepared the catalogs for Incunabula, Hebraica and Judaica (1981) and Hebraica from the Valmadonna

From the President
Those of us who attended the 2002 Fall Conference, hosted by YIVO at The Center for Jewish History, were rewarded with Brad Sabin Hill's erudite lecture on the history of Jewish publishing in Poland. The wonderful venue and the opportunity to network with fellow members provided an interesting and informative afternoon at our chapter's first program of the season. Meeting your needs for engaging instruction and providing stimulating opportunities for sharing information are among the goals of NYMA programming. Your suggestions for future presentations are invited and are always appreciated.

I would like to thank all the NYMA board members who worked so hard in 2001-2002. Special thanks are due as well to all who are remaining on the Board, continuing to give of their time and expertise to plan the upcoming Reference, Day School/ High School, and Cataloging Workshops. I also want to welcome our two newest members of the board: Rachail Kurtz, of the Joel Braverman High School Library of Flatbush Yeshiva and Ina Rubin Cohen, of the Jewish Theological Seminary Library. Together, they are co-chairing the Reference Workshop, and they have approached the planning process with great enthusiasm.

As the year progresses, you will be hearing more about the exciting plans for the June 2004 National AJL Convention, which our chapter will host at the Brooklyn Marriott. Helping with all the myriad details of the Convention’s preparation will be a wonderful opportunity for you to become more involved on both the local and national levels.

Thank you for your loyal support of our organization this past year. I look forward to meeting all of you at our upcoming workshops.

Shaindy (Susan) Kurzmann
Influence & Confluence

Dr. Hill gave a fascinating lecture on the history, both cultural and bibliographic, of Jewish printing in Poland, a 400-year period that spanned the 16th century until the eve of World War Two. During the incunabula period (1455 to 1500), fewer than 150 of the 5,000 books printed in Europe were in Hebrew. None of these were printed in Germany, where the printers’ guilds prevented Jewish participation in this field. Rather, the first Hebrew books were printed in Italy, and soon Hebrew printing spread to Spain. In Portugal and the Ottoman Empire, where many Jews fled after the Inquisition, the art of printing was actually introduced by the Jews, and the first book ever published was in Hebrew. In 1512, Hebrew was printed in Prague, the first place of Hebrew printing north of the Alps.

In Poland, Latin was printed from the 1470s, and within 50 years the first book in the Polish language appeared at Cracow. Hebrew books, in fact, have been printed in Poland almost as long as books in Polish. In Silesia (although then not part of Poland), Hayim Schwartz, who had trained in the Hebrew press at Prague, printed a Hebrew Pentateuch, and in 1537 the apostate Paul Helycz printed a New Testament in Yiddish, ironically some years before the first Polish edition came out.

By the end of the 16th century, Hebrew had been printed in five Polish towns. In the hundred years between 1540 and 1640, the major centers of Hebrew printing were Venice, Cracow, Lublin, Constantinople and Prague. The cosmopolitan character of Hebrew printing, as well as the Italian influence in 16th century Poland, is reflected in a trilingual Hebrew, Yiddish, and Italian glossary, printed in Cracow in 1569. During this time Jewish printers from Poland helped established the first Hebrew press in Palestine. Printers from Lublin, moving first to Constantinople, eventually settled in Safed. This was the first and for many years the only Hebrew press in the Holy Land.

Flowering

In the 17th century Hebrew printing spread to Galicia, in Eastern Poland, introduced by an enterprising printer from Amsterdam. By 1800, after the partitioning of Poland, twenty towns in Eastern Europe had Hebrew presses. The proliferation of Yiddish printing in this period coincided with the rise of printing in other vernacular languages, especially Ukrainian, a phenomenon still little recognized by cultural historians of Eastern Europe.

With the rise of the Hasidic movement, an unprecedented growth of printing occurred. By 1830 fifty towns had Hebrew presses. Hebrew presses were also established in Warsaw in 1796, and in Vilna, in 1799. Ironically, these were managed by Christian printers who hired Jewish workers to do the actual typesetting. The government encouraged indigenous Hebrew printing in the interests of the national economy, to prevent the outflow of capital to the foreign book market.

(Cont’d on Pg. 7)
“Head” of the Class?
It’s All a Matter of Principal
At Day School Conference
by Esther Nussbaum,
Librarian, Ramaz Upper School

How great can a day school be? A lot depends on who runs it. School heads and administrators had a chance to sit on the other side of the desk on October 14th, 2002, as they listened to a panel of AJL librarians at a conference of the Association of Modern Orthodox Day School Principals, held at the Hilton Hotel in Newark, NJ.

The opportunity arose when AJL President, Pearl Berger, who is Dean of Yeshiva University Libraries, learned of the conference and suggested to the organizer, Rabbi Jeremiah Unterman, that the conference include a session about libraries. That suggestion developed, under the guidance of Edith Lubetski, Librarian of Stern College, into two concurrent sessions: “What Can Your Library/Librarian Do for Your School?”, one with elementary school librarians and the other with high school librarians.

The elementary school panel, chaired by Edith Lubetski, included Shelly Feit of Moriah of Englewood, NJ; Leslie Monchar of the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy, Livingston, NJ; and Merna Davidowitz of ASHAR in Rockland County, NY. The elementary school librarians subdivided their responsibilities according to the topics: “The Librarian and the Administration”; “The Librarian and the Faculty”; and “The Librarian and the Students.” They presented their views to the principals, many of whom probably had never fully comprehended how much a library, and its librarian, can do: besides maintaining the collection of materials, he or she can give curricular assistance, teach research and literary skills, and help attain the goal of making the students into a community of lifelong learners.

The high school panel, organized by Joyce Levine of North Shore Hebrew Academy, Great Neck, NY, included Esther Nussbaum of Ramaz Upper School in New York City and Bruchie Weinstein of Magen David Yeshiva High School in Brooklyn. Their discussion was divided into two topics: what the principal can expect from the librarian, and what the librarian should expect from the principal. The panelists emphasized the need for well equipped and well funded libraries, which would ably provide the use of instructional and information technology, professionalism, and collaborative efforts. Everyone lauded the need for networking and being involved in our own continuing education.

Edith Lubetski enthusiastically credited AJL for its efforts and success in promoting Judaic librarianship. And the principals, who admitted to former ignorance of what a library does, greatly appreciated their newfound enlightenment. In hand, librarians and principals can move to the head of the class and work toward improving and maintaining day school programs.
Look What’s Happening . . .

Write On!
The Who’s Who (or wannabes) of the Jewish publishing world converged on November 24, 2002, at the Jewish Children’s Book Writers’ Conference, co-sponsored by Steven Siegel, of the 92nd Street Y Buttenwieser Library, and the Jewish Book Council. Writers, editors, publishers, and illustrators schmoozed and “did lunch” in the lobby of the 92nd Street Y, while hearing lectures on the craft of manuscripts, what’s hot (and not) in Jewish juvenile book publishing, and how to find an agent. Fellow AJL member Rachel Glasser delivered the guidelines for the Sydney Taylor Manuscript Competition. The conference left many an attendee feeling ancy to dig out the word processors or, better yet, that dog-eared first draft of the great Jewish-American novel.

Best Wishes
To Naomi Steinberger, past president of NYMA, who was appointed Acting Director of the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America for the 2002-2003 fiscal year. Ms. Steinberger previously served as Executive Librarian, Systems Librarian and Administrative Librarian for Public Services over the past 15 years.

To Joyce Levine, now Director of Library & Media Services, at North Shore Hebrew Academy High School, Great Neck, NY.

To Eileen Shmuelman, librarian of Ramaz Hebrew Academy, on her retirement.

Mazel Tov!
To Shmuel and Rachael Kurtz, on the birth of their son Yehoshua.
To Meir & Edith Lubetski, on the birth of their granddaughter Mia Liora. Parents Saul and Rebecca Lubetski.
To David & Pearl Berger, on the birth of their twin granddaughters Batya Rachel & Yaffa Shneidt. Parents Gedalyahu & Miriam Berger.
To Shulamith Cohen, on the birth of her granddaughter Rivka Meira. Parents Rabbi Menachem and Devora Lazer.
To Ron and Marion Stein, on the birth of their granddaughter Eilana Hadas. Parents Naomi and Yehudah Najman.
To Susan and Irving Young, on the birth of their grandson Yehudah. Parents Eli & Lauren Bacharach.
To Meir and Edith Lubetski, on the engagement of their daughter Leah to Ari Feldman. May they all schech nachas.

Condolences
To Pearl Berger, on the loss of her mother Tova Rabinowitz. To Faya Cohen, on the loss of her father Abraham Alpert. To Leah Moskowitz, on the loss of her mother Sara and her father Sol. May they all be comforted among the mourners of Zion in Jerusalem.

Comments? Ideas? Suggestions? Or professional news about aie, write to:
AJL-NYMA COMMITTEE, c/o Hallie Cantor, 883 Kingston Ave. #81, Brooklyn, NY 11213.
E-mail: hcantor@ymail.yu.edu / Fax: 212-340-7808

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Please Note
The membership CD which arrived recently has an incorrect number for Esther Nussbaum and Chaya Wiesman, librarians at the Ramaz Upper School. The correct number should be: 312-774-8000. Extensions are 7328 for Ms. Nussbaum, and 7329 for Ms. Wiesman.

The new e-mail address of Tina Weiss, MLS student at Queens College and Library Assistant at HUC-JIR New York, is tina613@hotmail.com.
Goodbye/Hello

Eileen Shmidman
was presented at the
Fall Conference with
jewelry and best wishes
upon her retirement from
Ramaz Hebrew Academy Library.
Ramaz colleague Esther Nussbaum
spoke a few words in her honor.
Ms. Shmidman has been
an active member of NYMA,
serving as Day School Workshop
Shaindy Kurzmann, Marion Stein,
Eileen Shmidman, Esther Nussbaum.

Hail, hail, the gang’s all here!

Focus on Libraries

Serving More Than Memories
History Survives & Grows
at Holocaust Resource Center in Bayside

by Sandra Marcus, Assistant Professor,
Coordinator of Reference Services & Information Literacy,
Kurt R. Schmeller Library, Queensborough Community College, CUNY

This article is the ninth in a series about Judaica libraries in the NYMA area.

For students and historians researching the Holocaust, teachers developing curricula, organizations seeking speakers, or survivors and their children tracing their roots, an excellent resource is readily available. The Holocaust Resource Center and Archives, housed in a pleasant, spacious basement of the Queensborough Community College Library building, provides all of the above and more. The Center includes over 10,000 books; hundreds of videotapes; periodical articles in print and microform; photographs, exhibits, and an extensive collection of doctoral dissertations. Individuals with identification may borrow the circulating books, and schools and organizations may borrow the videos.

From History Reborn
Soon the Center will celebrate its 20th anniversary. It was founded in 1983 by Dr. William L. Shulman, Professor Emeritus at Queensborough Community College. A professor of Jewish history and the Holocaust, Dr. Shulman recognized the need for a broader range of research material for his courses. He began collecting resources and initiated the establishment of a dedicated facility. Dr. Kurt R. Schmeller, then College President, supported the idea, and the Holocaust Center was born. Funding was and still is provided both by State and private contributions.

A non-sectarian advisory board guides the development of the Center. Three public lectures are offered each semester, open free to the public. The Center also finds speakers for programs in schools or community organizations. Naturally, education is a primary focus of the Center, which regularly sends and publishes curriculum information and suggestions to schools of all levels.

Beyond Artifacts
Various items are published regularly: a directory of the Association of Holocaust Organizations, with detailed descriptions; and indexes to the collection, including A Guide to Videos on Prejudice and Stereotyping, Annotated Videography on Holocaust and Related Subjects, and Educational Resource Guide on the Holocaust. Books are cataloged with the collection of the Kurt R. Schmeller Library of Queensborough Community College and may be located via the Library's online public access catalog, CUNY+PLUS, which is accessible from off-campus sites via the Library website: http://web.aec.qcc.cuny.edu/Library. Items in the Holocaust collection are identified in the "Holdings" column as "Queensborough-Holocaust Center." They contain "HOLOC" as a prefix to the Library of Congress call numbers.

Staff is made up mostly of volunteers, most of whom are themselves Holocaust survivors. Lee Potasinski, who is a Research Associate with the Center, is an Auschwitz survivor who spent 10 years compiling a collection of Holocaust-related articles published in the New York Times from 1933 to 1948. These clippings, mounted in 31 binders, are

The Center includes over 10,000 books; hundreds of videotapes, periodical articles in print & microform; photographs, exhibits, & an extensive collection of doctoral dissertations.

(Cont'd on Page 7)
As Warsaw and Vilna became the cultural and intellectual capitals of East European Jewry, the growth of printing in these towns reflected their importance. The Talmud issued by Romm at Vilna in 1854 remains even today the standard edition of this work. Polish-Jewish presses were also important outside of Poland. In the early 20th century, rabbinic authorities in Western Europe and the New World often sent their manuscripts to be printed at the presses in Poland. Photo-offset editions of books first printed in Poland continue to be published in New York and in Israel, especially in the Hasidic world.

Warsaw and Vilna were also the centers of secular Yiddish publishing during the high point of Yiddish literary culture. Yiddish printing, especially of newspapers and serials, became a vast enterprise. By 1900, Warsaw had 30 presses and 1,000 workers in the Hebrew and Yiddish printing trade.

The End

Highlighting the stark contrast between the 1930s and the present, Dr. Hill pointed out that in 1984 a Yiddish book was issued in Poland. Since it was apparently no longer possible there to print and publish a book-length work in this language, the book had to be reproduced instead from a typescript. "It is a pitiful remnant of what once was one of the greatest centers of Hebrew printing," he said. In fact, Poland had been the "greatest center of Hebrew printing in the Diaspora, rivaled (especially in Yiddish) only by New York in the wake of the mass migration of East European Jewry to America." In no other country was the extent of Hebrew printing so broad, or so expansive. Works ranged from popular literature to the finest scholarship, in both Hebrew and Yiddish.

Nevertheless, the bibliographic studies of the Polish presses are still incomplete. One massive bibliography of Hebrew books, which also included the output of the Polish presses – the work of four generations, on cards and not yet set in type – was lost in the Holocaust.

Sadly, the disappearance of Jewish printing in Poland reflects the loss of a great and influential civilization. It is a loss many of us feel today. Yet the conference reminded us of how the past was being regained through historical and bibliographic research. A yasher koach to Dr. Hill, and to NYMA, for a conference that no doubt left an indelible "imprint" on the minds of many.

(Holocaust Resource Center, cont’d from Pg. 6)

available to the public. An easily accessible print index of the collection, published by the Center, facilitates its use. Mr. Potasinski dedicated this to those who perished in the Holocaust. Other important resources are Yizkor books from a large number of shtetls. The names in these books provide valuable information for family tracing, another service of the Center.

Traveling exhibits are also sponsored. Currently they include "Anatomy of a Ghetto," To Save One Life: the Story of Righteous Gentiles," and "The Overlooked Holocaust: The Devastation of the Sephardic Communities." Inquiries about booking exhibits should be directed to Sarah Roberts, Assistant to the Director.

Parting Words

The Bayside Holocaust Center is open Monday through Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; and one Sunday a month from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Special hours can be arranged for special group needs.

The Center is located at Queensborough Community College, 222-05 56th Avenue, Bayside. Phone number: 718-281-5770.

The website http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/HolocaustCenter provides additional information. It is here that the mission statement of the Center is eloquently presented:

"As distance begins to change our perception of the Holocaust and as the survivors who promised to carry its testimony to the world go one by one to join those who did not survive – it has become the solemn mission of Holocaust centers to embody and carry out that promise. It is a mission that grows in intensity and purpose as deniers set out to distort historic truth and purveyors of hate and bigotry distribute their wares."