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The American Jewish Periodical Center

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The goal of the American Jewish Periodical Center in Cincinnati, Ohio is to preserve American Jewish periodicals on microfilm. The authors of this article explain how the Center is meeting and expanding beyond this goal.

American Jewish periodical publication began with the appearance of *The Jew* in 1823. During the next century and a quarter, some 1,200 American Jewish serials were published in at least eight different languages: English, German, Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, Ladino, Serbo-Croatian, and Hungarian. For historians of American Jewish life, this output of the American Jewish press constitutes a primary resource, which is also of significant value to historians studying ethnic elements of American culture. Unfortunately, only a small part of the total number of these American Jewish periodicals could be found in library collections, and many of these were rapidly deteriorating. In 1955, Dr. Jacob R. Marcus, Director of the American Jewish Archives, and Dr. Herbert C. Zafren, Director of Libraries, both of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati (HUC), created the American Jewish Periodical Center (AJPC) in order to preserve American Jewish periodicals on microfilm, and to make them easily accessible, either via interlibrary loan or through sale to the community of potential users. The AJPC began its microfilming activities in 1956. Over the years, it has performed a major service to Jewish and American scholarship by disseminating its large and varied resources among institutions and individuals engaged in research.

Holdings of the AJPC

The original goal of the AJPC was to microfilm all American Jewish newspapers and periodicals, regardless of language, published in the United States up to the year 1925. It was intended that for post-1925 imprints, only a select group of titles would be microfilmed. Recently, the AJPC has expanded its goals. In order to approach completeness of holdings and to obviate the problems that often arise

when the filming of a newspaper title is deferred until deterioration has already set in, the AJPC now films a large number of current American Jewish newspapers from the HUC Library's holdings. Efforts are continually being made to film titles not yet in the collection and to fill in holdings for incomplete titles irrespective of the original 1925 cut-off date. Widely-held Jewish periodicals, such as *Commentary*, *Moment*, or *Midstream*, are not now filmed by the AJPC, but are bound and kept as part of the Library's collection. In addition to drawing upon the resources of the HUC Libraries, the AJPC has had the cooperation of some thirty institutions and numerous individuals in developing its collections. Before filming a title the AJPC seeks to assemble as complete a run as possible via the interlibrary loan network and also through donations of periodicals to the Center. Copies of these films are then made available to participating institutions at a discount. When it is not possible to acquire a run for filming, the AJPC will purchase positive microfilm copies of negatives held at other institutions. This is done not only to further the bibliographic goals of the AJPC, but also to make the purchased title more widely available to its community of users.

As part of an expanded filming operation, synagogue bulletins from more than 400 American congregations are periodically filmed and added to the collection. These bulletins chronicle events in local Jewish communities and are important primary documents for the writing of the history of American Jewry. Additionally, Jewish student publications are filmed. To date, microfilms of forty-eight student publications dating from the mid-1960s to the early 1970s have been added to the collection.

The AJPC is located on the basement floor of the Klau Library. The hours of operation of the Center are Monday through Friday 8:30 AM-5:00 PM. There are no weekend hours and the area is kept locked outside of the Center's regular hours of operation. The Center is staffed by two individuals, the AJPC coordinator and a library technical assistant who operates the camera. The coordinator is responsible for the daily operations of the Center which include supervising the microfilming operation, sending films out to be processed and printed, processing

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microfilm purchase orders, and supervising the use of the microfilms and of the equipment. A Library liaison to the AJPC coordinates the needs of the AJPC with those of the Library. Student workers are employed, as available, in tasks involving labeling and shelving of microfilms.

Accessing AJPC's Holdings

The holdings of the AJPC are accessible through the printed catalogs of the Center, *Jewish Newspapers and Periodicals on Microfilm Available at the American Jewish Periodical Center*, with editions published in 1957, 1960, and 1984. The latest catalog has the most up-to-date listing of titles held by the Center. The first two catalogs complement the third, as they contain information such as the names of editors and a characterization of editorial policy omitted from the last catalog for the sake of timely publication. The holdings can also be located using three of the card catalogs of the Hebrew Union College Library: the Hebrew Titles Catalog, the Post-1966 Library of Congress Catalog, and the Pre-1967 Freidus catalog which has been largely published as the *Dictionary Catalog of the Klau Library, Cincinnati* (1964).

Prior to 1980, AJPC cataloging was an internal function of the Center. A copy of this cataloging was provided by the Center to the Library to be included in the Library's catalogs. Where the Library continued to hold the hard copy, the AJPC holdings appear as notes added to the main entry cards; only title cards were added for items held exclusively by the AJPC in microform. In 1980, the Library's cataloging department took over this cataloging function from the AJPC. A flowchart was devised to aid librarians in determining which items were candidates for inclusion in the AJPC and how these candidates were to be processed. In accordance with this flowchart, the first step in cataloging newspapers is determining whether the item will be added to the AJPC. All newspapers of Jewish content published within the Western Hemisphere fall within the Center's scope. Prospective items are fully cataloged, before filming, under the provisions of AACR2. The cataloging records for all roman-alphabet newspapers are entered into OCLC. Items with roman-alphabet text and a Hebrew alphabet title are also entered into OCLC, with the Hebrew title romanized. In the HUC Library, the romanized Hebrew title card is altered to reflect the Hebrew title in Hebrew characters and

then filed in the Hebrew Titles Catalog. Items with text in the Hebrew alphabet are cataloged in-house; the card set is produced directly in Hebrew characters using the Library's Apple II+ system. All shelf list cards are sent to the Periodical Center to be filed, and all other cards are filed in the appropriate Library catalogs.

The originals of many of the new titles being filmed are discarded at the conclusion of the filming process. For items already in the Library's collection for which the decision has been made to film for conservation purposes and still keep the original, a note is added to the catalog cards indicating that a microfilm copy is available at the AJPC. In this case, no additional record is added to the OCLC database. If it is decided to keep a new item in both original and microform—a situation which has not arisen in the recent past—then two records would not be made; the Library's cataloging would reflect the original and would include a microfilm note. Temple bulletins are not fully cataloged and so are not entered into OCLC; only a shelf list and a main entry card are produced. The description of temple bulletins includes the corporate author, the place of publication, the title(s) of the bulletins, and the AJPC holdings. Student publications are fully cataloged using AACR2. A holdings note is added to the catalog cards indicating that a microfilm copy is available at the AJPC. Temple bulletins are discarded after filming; student publications remain a part of the Library's permanent collection.

Preparing Materials for Filming

No regular schedule for the filming of newspapers exists. Prospective candidates for filming are monitored by the Library's serial assistant. Serials are reviewed for claiming three times a year: in September/October, in January, and in April—these months marking the key times for volume changes in the Jewish and secular calendars. During claiming, a check is made to ascertain whether enough issues have been received to warrant the filming of a particular title. Thus, some newspapers are filmed annually while others are filmed every two or three years or less frequently. The newspapers are first collated; missing numbers are then re-checked against the serial record to determine whether they were received and are then searched and/or claimed.

Once a title has been approved for filming, a master record card is typed to accompany the item

throughout processing. This card includes the title either as it appears on the periodical in Roman characters, or in Hebrew characters with a romanized title included. Other information provided includes the place of publication, the call number, the volumes being filmed and the dates covered by these volumes, and a list of missing issues, if applicable. If there is a preponderance of missing issues, as is sometimes the case with older newspapers, the card may instead list those issues being filmed. In those cases in which the master record card indicates missing issues, a card is prepared to represent and identify each missing issue not then being filmed, and it is included and filmed together with the collated issues. Once filming is completed the master record cards are filed in the AJPC and serve as the basis for printed catalog updates.

The processing differs when "dead" titles become candidates for filming by the AJPC. In these cases the title is checked against the *National Register of Microform Masters*, *Newspapers in Microform: United States*, *Guide to Microforms in Print*, and certain other more specialized Judaica lists, in order to determine whether any other institution has filmed the title. Once the decision is made to proceed with the filming, the Library's holdings are collated by the serials department and a master record card is prepared. If at all possible, the Library will try to fill in its holdings before filming. If, however, the item is in a seriously deteriorating condition, it will be immediately filmed and then cataloged.

An important step in the filming process is determining whether the Center will be able to sell copies of a particular title or will only maintain it for in-house use or loan. When a title is being filmed for the first time by the Center, a letter is sent to the publisher requesting permission to sell copies of the film. The responses to these letters are kept on file in the Library Office and a record of the responses is maintained in the AJPC.

The Filming Process

Once the collation, cataloging, and preparation of the master record card are completed, newspapers are sent to the AJPC where those that require it are flattened before filming.* The Center has two Recordak 35mm cameras: a micro-file model D which is used as the primary camera, and a micro-file model MRD-2 used as a backup. The camera operator films both for the AJPC and for the Library.

In addition to filming newspapers over his fifteen-year tenure, the operator has microfilmed rare books, manuscripts, broadsides, and various special collections for the Library and is thus most adept at securing the best possible micro-image from items which are difficult to film, such as crumbling nineteenth century newspaper.

Several targets are used in the filming operation. A resolution chart is filmed at the beginning and end of each roll. Preceding each title filmed a second target is used: "Microfilmed by the American Jewish Periodical Center, Cincinnati, Ohio [date]." Special care is taken with those papers that are particularly brittle, and they are handled as little as possible. After filming, newspapers are generally discarded, but only after the master negative has been returned and checked, a positive printed, and the print checked. Some titles, however, may be kept as part of the Library holdings even after they have been filmed, including the *American Israelite* (1854-), *The American Jewess*, (1895-1899), and *The Asmonean* (1849-1858). This decision is based on the physical condition of the title and on its value as an historical artifact.

The filming of Hebrew and Yiddish titles requires special attention. As Hebrew and Yiddish are read from right to left, care must be taken to rotate the camera, usually 180 degrees, so that the text will proceed in linear fashion on the finished product. As some newspapers may include both a roman character language as well as a Hebrew character language, the operator must pay close attention throughout the filming process.

Once the filming of a reel is completed, it is turned over to the AJPC coordinator with a handwritten slip listing all items included on that reel. This slip is kept until the film reels have been processed, printed, and labelled. Once a week films are sent out to Kodak for processing. Items that are requested as a rush order are sent to a local processing lab approved by Kodak. Upon its return, the master negative is examined by the Coordinator for any flaws that may have occurred during the filming process; portions are refilmed as necessary.

*cf. *Specifications for the Microfilming of Newspapers in the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1971, reprinted by National Micrographics Association, Silver Spring, MD, 1983) 2 : 1 "Treatment of Creases and Wrinkles," pp. 2-3.

Films that pass inspection are returned to Kodak in Chicago for positive printing on silver halide film. Once again, if a film is needed for a rush order, it is printed locally. The local lab is also used to test for the archival quality of films which are purchased for the collection from outside sources.

Storing the Microfilm

The AJPC is responsible for supervising the storage of both its own and the HUC Library's microfilms. Master negatives are stored in a climate-controlled restricted area under double-key security. The file and drawer location of each master negative title can be located using a card index. Recently, space in these microfilm storage files has been completely filled; microfilms are now being shelved in acid-free microfilm storage boxes on shelves in alphabetic sequence in the security area. The use positives are maintained in a locked climate controlled area adjacent to the AJPC where they are easily accessible upon request.

The holdings of the Center are shelved alphabetically by state. Within each state the films are further divided by city and then shelved by language. Exceptions occur in those cases where different titles of varying languages are found on one reel of film. As the titles do not have call numbers, a patron wishing to look at a film must provide the city in which the periodical was published. Retrieval of films is sometimes complicated for those titles which have changed their city of publication. Titles that have been published in more than one city over time are shelved as an uninterrupted run under one of the cities of publication, but no clear rule for picking such a city has been followed.

The AJPC has three 35mm microfilm readers, one microfilm-microfiche reader printer, and a microfiche reader. There are two microfiche readers in the Library's technical services area, and a supplementary microfilm reader in the reference area on the first floor of the Library. This microfilm reader is a recent addition to the reference area; it allows patrons to use microfilm during those hours in which the Center is closed but the Library is open, such as on Sundays and evenings. As the AJPC and Library microfilm collections do not generally circulate, and are not accessible outside of the normal operating hours of the Center, patrons must make arrangements in advance to secure films at the circulation desk when the AJPC is closed. It is also

possible to view almost all of the AJPC's holdings at the three satellite centers located in branch libraries of the Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, New York, and Jerusalem.

Additionally, access to the holdings of the AJPC is available through interlibrary loan and by purchase. The Center will lend up to four reels of any one title at one time to an institution for one month. Interlibrary loan requests come into the Center both directly and through the Hebrew Union College Library. Microfilm is also distributed through sale. Individuals and institutions must make requests for purchase in writing. Notes in the 1984 edition of the Center's printed catalog inform the potential purchaser whether the AJPC may supply a particular title for purchase. Those items which it is not allowed to sell are indicated by the note "Apply to:." Temple bulletins and school periodicals are available for loan only; no attempts have been made, to date, to secure permission from the publishers to sell copies.

Acquisition of Canadian and Latin Materials

In order to make the AJPC's holdings more broadly representative of "American" Jewish periodicals, the Center has begun to acquire and film Canadian and Latin American titles. The South American Jewish Periodicals Project (SAJPP) grew out of an offer made to the Library by Rabbi Clifford M. Kulwin who had accepted a position with the Associaçao Religiosa Israelita (ARI) in Rio de Janeiro. When he offered to try to help the Library improve its holdings of South American Jewish periodicals, Rabbi Kulwin received a short list of periodicals which needed to be filled in retrospectively.

In the winter of 1984, Rabbi Kulwin informed the Library that he had located a run of one of the periodicals on our list, the *Resenha Judaica*, published in Sao Paulo. He also offered to have the ARI's *Boletim* microfilmed. Rabbi Kulwin located a company in Sao Paulo, Informacoes Microformas e Sistemas (IMS), under the direction of Dr. Frederic M. Litto, which was interested in producing the microcopy for us. The six-week turnaround time in mail service, coupled with the logistical problems of maintaining a sophisticated operation in a developing country, added both uncertainty and frustration to the process of setting up a functioning project but eventually, an agreement with IMS was reached in which the company undertook to provide

a first-generation silver halide negative at a set price per frame. As a trial run, IMS filmed the *Resenha Judaica* and the *Boletim* of the ARI, as well as a partial run of the *Cronica Israelita* (Sao Paulo). As the film arrived from IMS, it was sent to the company in Cincinnati which processes Library and AJPC microfilm for whatever quality testing was still possible. A decision was made to expand the bibliographic horizons of the AJPC and to add these microfilms of South American Jewish periodicals to its holdings rather than to the Library's collection. Over time, all American Jewish periodical microfilm holdings of the Library will be added to the AJPC.

Through the spring of 1985, IMS continued to film the copy supplied by Rabbi Kulwin in one or two title batches. Rabbi Kulwin's imminent return to the United States necessitated drawing up a bibliographically tighter agreement with IMS. As a result of this agreement, IMS sent the AJPC a list of sixteen titles which they had queued up for filming. These titles were searched against the Library's holdings and against lists of Judaica periodicals already on microfilm in other institutions. IMS was then notified as to which titles and holdings should be filmed for the AJPC. Rabbi Kulwin secured the services of a bibliographic researcher who will be paid a commission based on the total number of frames filmed by IMS for the AJPC. With all known Judaic periodical collections in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo exhausted, it became necessary to work out an agreement with IMS covering pick-up and return of originals to be filmed.

IMS proposed a per-frame increase to cover expenses; the AJPC countered with an actual mileage reimbursement and a *per diem* formula which were subsequently accepted by IMS.

To date, the AJPC has received film for seven titles and is expecting film for sixteen more titles—all published in Brazil. The Center hopes to expand the project to include Argentinian and Uruguayan periodicals this year, and after that, if it proves possible, to include periodicals from other South American countries. The AJPC has acted here on a "film what is found and needed" philosophy rather than following a policy of searching for specific titles and then filming them. Given the distances involved, the qualifications of the bibliographic researchers, the difficulties in locating the copy to be filmed, and the fact that the small want list with which we started has, as yet, not been completely fulfilled, we feel that our policy is a practical one. The SAJPP will continue as long as South American Jewish periodicals can be located and filmed.

In its thirty years of activity, the American Jewish Periodical Center has gone far towards fulfilling its initial goal of preserving on microfilm the pre-1925 output of the American Jewish press and making it more easily accessible to a community of users. It has expanded its goals to include many post-1925 American Jewish imprints and has become more broadly "American" with the inclusion of Canadian and Latin American Jewish periodicals in its collection.