

Michelle Hamilton

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

The Sephardic Past in the Digital Future

This study imagines a Sephardic archive not as a physical site that houses the artifacts, texts, and history of a nation-state or Empire, but one that allows us to access those objects (or exposes their absence) and others, and to bring artifacts from different official archives into dialogue in a different, virtual space, thus creating an additional, but not exclusionary, epistemic home, namely that of Sephardic studies. In it the author explores the potential advantages and practical limitations, as well as existing models of transnational resources—such as the *Friedberg Genizah Project* and the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, as well as del Barco and Vegas Montaner’s project of cataloguing the Hebrew manuscripts in Spanish libraries—that could be considered when thinking of what form a Sephardic archive could take. This study also explores how issues of language and identity fare when translated into the metadata used to make digitized information available.

Perhaps no other group has tested not only the limits of place, identity, and historical period—the essential descriptors of the traditional archive—as have the Sephardim, those Jews or descendants of Jews that trace their origins to the Iberian Peninsula.

Consequently those of us who study the Sephardim and their history hail from a variety of “official” disciplines, Spanish and Portuguese studies, anthropology, Ottoman studies,

Music, Latin American studies, linguistics, medieval/early modern/contemporary studies, history, Jewish studies, etc. The Sephardic aspect of our research is often subsumed as a subcategory of the larger, clearer, definable discipline within which we work; that reflects the socio-political forces that have shaped contemporary academic fields of study, based largely on the geopolitical realities of the past century, on the accepted historical divisions of Modernity, and other epistemic orderings that most of us have come to suspect even as we continue to perform our scholarly activities in their shadow. Similarly the material artifacts and texts we study, performing philology as Erich Auerbach embodied it, from the distance of exile, are found in a variety of institutional and private collections worldwide, none of which taken independently can be characterized as a Sephardic archive. In fact, the idea of a Sephardic archive, a site not housing (in whatever format) proof texts of Sephardic studies as rival to the narratives of origins and authenticity with which the philologists of the last century constructed the narratives of nation (what Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin have characterized as “one of the most potent and dangerous myths—the myth of autochthony”) but instead an archive for doing Sephardic studies, namely the fundamentally comparative work that crosses linguistic, ethnic, national, and temporal boundaries as it brings texts and the scholars who work with them into dialogue (“Diaspora” 699). Such an archive could not take the form of a traditional (national, state, family, or individual) archive, but would, indeed, need the flexibility, global reach and virtual potential that digital technology offers.

In this paper I consider the possibility and nature of such an archive in light of recent studies that have focused on the contested space of archive as part of the national projects of the modern world. The work of Ann Laura Stoler and Roberto González

Echevarría on the nature of the colonial archive have enjoined the users of such archives to work, in Stoler's terms, against the grain of the archive, and to examine not only the nature of the sources the archive contains, but also the forces governing the very constitution of the archive. These lines of inquiry have their basis in the work of Michel Foucault (*Archeology of Knowledge*) and Jacques Derrida ("Archive Fever") that inspired researchers to examine the discourses of power and meaning created in the structuring of archival artifacts. Once the archive itself became object of inquiry, so too could that which was left out of the archive. The work of Gayatri Spivak and others called attention to silences created by state archives that privilege the dominant discourses of power and those who produce them over those subaltern subjects excluded from access to and participation in such discourses and their archives. Those scholars that turned to social and micro-history sought to undertake work that could fill in these archival silences, expanding the archive to accommodate such voices. This is the intellectual project of a "postcolonial archive" described by Sandhya Shetty and Elizabeth Bellamy (25). A Sephardic archive as imagined in this paper must be just such an archive, namely one that is not the physical site that houses the artifacts, texts, and history of the nation-state or Empire, but one that allows us to access those objects (or exposes their absence) and others, and to bring artifacts from different official archives into dialogue in a different, virtual space, thus creating an additional, but not exclusionary, epistemic home, Sephardic studies.

Defining or conceiving of a Sephardic archive necessarily confronts the challenges or limits of definition that those of us working in Sephardic studies have faced when defining what is Sephardic or who the Sephardim are. Both Foucault and Derrida

stress the archive as the institutional memory of nation and of sciences/fields of study.¹ If there is no Sephardic archive is there such a thing as Sephardic studies, something that is not Spanish studies nor (wholly) Jewish studies, nor Latin American studies, nor Postcolonial studies? In my own work on late medieval and early modern Iberia, this problem has played out not only in definitions of the Sephardim, but in articulating the relationship between Sephardic, Spanish, and Jewish. In my field of study it is the figure of the *converso* that serves as a lightning rod around which scholars attempt to define the limits of these identities (whether Jewish, Spanish, Portuguese, Ottoman, etc.).² This very testing of the limits of identity constitutes an integral aspect of much of the work being done in what we might think of as Sephardic studies. Such studies include Yosef Kaplan's investigation of Sephardic (vs. Ashkenazi) identity in seventeenth-century Amsterdam; Marc Baer's work on Shabbetians in the Ottoman world (Sephardim that blur the line between Jewish and Muslim); Irene Silverblatt's work on seventeenth-century Andean indigenes tried by the Inquisition for Judaizing; Jonathan Israel's work on transnational trade networks of early modern Sephardic families through the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic; and Stanley Hordes's work on the self-identified descendants of Sephardic families in New Mexico whose genealogical (re)constructions of identity open a whole can of worms regarding genetic/biological vs. social/communal identification. This last subject is also explored by D. M. Swetchinski, who examines how Sephardic descendants of *conversos* in Amsterdam constructed a collective past, not out of an archive of personal memories, but out of the theatrical and literary performances in Portuguese and Castilian, creating a Sephardic identity that was neither completely Iberian nor completely Jewish (68-75). In her work, Renée Melammed

returns again and again to both the concept of memory, both collective and historical, and the many factors—Inquisition, Expulsion, and even intra-communal rites of secrecy—that have worked to obliterate the material traces of memory (and/or keep them from coming into existence to begin with) that could be collected in a traditional archive.

Digitization and open access promise the creation of a new archive—one that does not simply construct a newly hegemonic counter-narrative to replace the grand narratives of the past, but instead to construct porous archives that gesture to and incorporate any number of other parallel narratives—the archive of the network which is the multi-nodal, ultimately horizontal multiplicity of hyper-text, for example (Beal and Lavin; Sassón-Henry). The utopian promise of a “library without walls” as envisioned by Roger Chartier, imagined even as the Library of Babel in the fiction of Borges, proves impossible even in the era of digitalization. The realities of its construction have instead shown that the old ideologies governing the archive have been perpetuated in current projects of digitization. Derrida asked in 1995 if the new archival machines of the late twentieth century “change anything” (15). He goes on to point out that “the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event” (17).

Models

Given that Sephardic culture and texts after 1492 have largely been (and continue to be) produced in the transnational context of Diaspora, which *de facto* has already led to their exclusion or uncomfortable position in the national archive, how can we expect

Sephardic texts (like the work of any number of other groups outside of the national narrative) to fare in the large digitization projects that take place in and are largely funded by those same national archives? As we see in catalogues such as that of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), the Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE) or the British Library, where many manuscripts produced by Sephardim are included in Oriental collections still only partially or wholly unavailable online, the perceived strangeness (linguistic, religious, and/or ethnic) has contributed to the decision to digitize other items in the collection first—generally those easily identifiable as part of the official national past. The *Biblioteca Digital Hispánica* of the BNE offers access to digitized copies of some 9253 manuscripts (*Biblioteca Digital*). Of the 39 items that come up when doing a search of Hebrew items, many are biblical texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and bibles from the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries.³ The British Library offers a similar story: the collection includes over 1350 Hebrew manuscripts, many of them Sephardic in nature. Only selections from two of these holdings, a Catalan Haggadah and a Portuguese Bible, both lavishly illustrated religious texts, are available on line (“Golden Haggadah – Introduction”).⁴ However, this, for now, is the extent of Sephardic texts in these collections available digitally.

The BnF has followed a different path when it comes to digitization. The *Mandragore* database of illuminated manuscripts (available only in French) provides an online search engine with a defined range of search items. Users can limit their search to the Occidental and/or Oriental collections as well as browse by theme. The current thematic classification includes several sections among which Sephardic material can be found, including Other Religions, Bible and Apocrypha, History, and Literature and

Fiction. Entries included in *Mandragore* direct the user to a page with a list of the descriptors of the manuscript entered by the archivist, and in some cases links to a selection of digital images of folios from the manuscript—usually not more than a handful—not a digital copy that allows the user to read the manuscript from front to back (not to say that this is the way any medieval reader would have read it either).

Such limited digital access, conversely, is the fate of many Romance language texts (a not insubstantial number of texts of the pre-1940s Sephardim) in the National Library of the Jewish people, which has archived and made available via an online catalogue the contents of the microfilmed Hebrew manuscripts project (discussed below), but has not incorporated into the Library's online catalogue works in other languages from before 1985 (*Sefriyah ha-L'umit*). In this example, as in the spotty representation of Sephardic texts in a non-Romance dialect in the digitization projects of the BNE, BnF and British Library discussed above, we see how the documentary past is shaped by the type of appraisals made by archivists that, among other factors, privilege the texts recorded in the language of an accepted version of the national narrative.

Even this brief sampling of recent work on the digitalization underway in established national archives, where many texts potentially relevant for Sephardic studies are housed, shows that the older positivist definitions of history and archive that are still being used to evaluate holdings are inadequate to represent the variety of geographic, linguistic, and confessional contexts studied under the rubric of the Sephardim. Newer models of archive though, conceived of in the context of postcolonialism offer an alternative for conceiving of the Sephardic archive. Blouin and Rosenberg have pointed

to the need for a new conception of archive required in response to a new view of history: history is no longer the truth of the past that waits to be discovered.

History is instead, at best, a contestable field of representations. It reflects in the concept of the multiple pasts the entwined nature of many different kinds of experience, rather than any single “authentic” past. From this perspective, the archive’s documents can also remain authoritative sources while not constituting in any sense the authentic “memory of the nation.” The archive, too, becomes a representational field. (129)

The Sephardim and their pasts embody the multiple pasts of history as conceived of by Blouin and Rosenberg and the prospect of a digital Sephardic archive would be just such a representational field, where the intertwined nature of a multiplicity of authentic pasts—Spanish, Portuguese, Jewish, Christian simultaneously—would be embodied in the very nature of the medium, that draws upon the “real”/“authentic” collections of state and national libraries to create a moveable and nation-less, placeless library and archive.

The challenges to such an archive, though, are much greater than the fact that national libraries continue (but not always) to privilege older historical narratives. While the latter may have been what so upset Derrida—his *mal*—and the factor that Stoler and González Echevarría focus on in the formation of the colonial archives of the Americas and the Netherlands, the more recent challenges confronting archivists and affecting their decisions about what to keep—what to archive and what not—spring from technological advances in data storage and usage—the “virtual tsunami” confronting today’s archivists

that Blouin and Rosenberg explore (9). Today archivists are confronted not only by an overwhelming sea of information, but also by the reality that information storage technology becomes obsolete almost as quickly as it appears (9). Should these archivists have the luxury of money and labor required to tend to and digitize artifacts from the existing collection, then, if endowed with a democratic spirit, they could focus their attention on those items most useful to the most people. As Charles Faulhaber points out, one of the criteria professional archivists use is “precisely how can we serve the greatest number of people given limited resources.” As director of the Bancroft Library, Faulhaber confronted the fact that “fewer than 1% of our users use our pre-1500 materials,” whereas, not surprisingly, the majority of users were instead interested in the Western Americana Collection (Faulhaber). Accordingly, the most resources were dedicated to the digitization of material that would serve the most users. This is unlikely to be scholars of Sephardic studies, at the Bancroft or at most other institutional and state archives.

Despite (or maybe because of) these challenges, a few scholars in the field have begun not only the intellectual, but also the technical work of making smaller collections of Sephardic texts available on line. Examples of these include the Stanford-based *Sephardi Studies Project*, which aims to make documents available so that scholars can explore the history and culture of Sephardim and eastern Jewries through the perspectives of the *Mediterranean Studies Forum*, and engage material that has emerged out of Aaron Rodrigue’s research focusing on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire. To date, however, this consists of a handful of documents. Samuel Armistead and Bruce Rosenstock’s *Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews* offers the results of research conducted by Samuel

Armistead, Joe Silverman, Israel Katz, and others over the latter half of the past century and allows remote users to access both texts and sound recordings. Another small collection with digitized content is the *National Sephardic Library*, whose organizational rationale is genealogical research. Other sites designed for genealogical research include *FASSAC's Digital Archive of Sephardica*; the Israel Genealogical Society; the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP); and, in part, the *David and Fella Shapell Family Digitization Project*.⁵ The scope and institutional support for these projects is not comparable to that of state-sponsored digitization projects undertaken in the context of the national archive.

One contemporary project undertaken outside the national archive that does, however, transcend a single institution and that is designed to virtually house and make accessible to scholars from a variety of disciplines hundreds of thousands of texts is the *Friedberg Genizah Project (FGP)*. While not recuperating lost texts, the *FGP* does reconstitute virtually an archive that is no longer together in one physical space. The Cairo Genizah collection offers “over 200,000 fragmentary Jewish texts” and “comprise[s] the largest and most diverse collection of medieval manuscripts in the world.” For over a millennium (between the eleventh and the nineteenth centuries), these works were collected in one geographic location, the Ben Ezra Synagogue of medieval Cairo. Upon discovery in the second half of the nineteenth century, the documents were dispersed to various archives worldwide, including the Cambridge University Library, the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and smaller university and private collections “across the globe, among them London, Oxford, Manchester, Paris, Geneva, Vienna, Budapest, St Petersburg, New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Jerusalem.” The aim

of the *FGP* is to offer scholars a digital archive that overcomes the fragmentation in which the physical collection exists today. “It is achieving this goal by locating the Genizah manuscripts and then identifying, cataloging, transcribing, translating, rendering them into digital format (i.e., photographing) and publishing them online.”⁶ In its aim and scope the *Friedberg Project* compares to earlier Israeli attempts to create transnational facsimile archives based on the most contemporary of technologies.

While in the case of the Genizah, its rationale is that all the artifacts it gives users access to were housed in one geographic location, another, older project offers yet another example of the archive without walls that approximates that of the proposed Sephardic virtual archive. The Jewish National and University Library (until 2008 The National Library of Israel) offers an early example of the attempt to create a transnational archive similar to that we could imagine for the Sephardim. As a National Library for a people defined by diaspora, the National Library of the Jewish People has as its mission the creation of an archive that extends beyond any one single national border or ideal, including “material in all the Jewish languages—Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, etc.—of every place and period.” The library actively continues to collect “works on the history and culture of the countries where Jews live, or lived” (“History and Aims”).

One of the most important projects of the last century for the scholar in search of a Sephardic archive undertaken was under the direction of the Jewish National Library and the Israeli government and is the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts. Before even the promise of digitization, Nehemiah Allony, followed by Benjamin Richler, Malachi Beit-Arié and a host of other scholars undertook and completed much of an ambitious project to catalogue and microfilm all the extant Hebrew manuscripts in

public and private collections world-wide. The Institute was conceived of in 1950 by the then Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, and begun under the direction of its first director Nehemiah Allony. This project anticipated the intellectual goals of many current digitization projects and sought to “save Hebrew literature” by finding “thousands of Hebrew manuscripts lying idle in various libraries....Many of them have vanished in the darkness of the past or have been destroyed by the wrath of oppressors.” For Ben Gurion these manuscripts were “those exiles of the spirit of Israel dispersed in the Diaspora.” He recognized that collecting reproductions of such manuscripts was a practical alternative to possessing the original.

Ben Gurion and Allony realized that, given that the history of the Jews is one of Diaspora, and that the major collections of Hebrew manuscripts are found scattered in collections world-wide—they could not create a physical archive to contain them all, but they could use technology to attempt to make these Hebrew works scattered across the globe accessible to scholars in one spot (*Department of Manuscripts*; Ortega Monasterio 2: 20). The work continued on the eve of the twenty-first century, and over 20,000 manuscript items were filmed after the fall of the Soviet Union—notably those of the Guenzberg Collection (now housed in the Russian National Library) of some 2000 medieval manuscripts including copies of the works of Maimonides, Al-Harizi, and David Al-Kimhi (Loewinger, et al).⁷

The Spanish scholar Francisco Javier del Barco del Barco has undertaken a project that builds on Allony and others’ pioneering work in microfilming and photocopying begun in the 1950s.⁸ Del Barco’s aim is to bring the work that these Israeli scholars conducted in Spanish libraries, now slipping into obscurity because of

technological change, "up-to-date" by adding data to the skeletal descriptions of Allony and by making this material accessible through contemporary digital technology. Del Barco and Luis Vegas Montaner are careful to include much useful metadata (some 42 items), such as information on shelfmarks, incipit and explicit, and type of binding in their catalogues of the Hebrew manuscripts in Spanish libraries (Vegas Montaner 80-84). This information is included and accessible in the digital version of the catalogues in the accompanying CD-Rom (del Barco del Barco).

This project, like others mentioned above, such as the *FGP*, which is in the process of translating into computer text pre-existing catalogue descriptions of the physical collections' items, also reveals some limitations that any attempt to conceive of a Sephardic digital archive would need to take into account. Both of the latter projects may serve as cautionary tales, for the technology upon which they are based have in the course of less than ten years become obsolete. The microfilm upon which the Hebrew manuscripts project is based is no longer a viable, accessible medium of scholarship in many libraries—the BNE announced in 2010 it was retiring microfilm, something the Biblioteca de Catalunya had done three years before—replaced in large part by the promise of the newer technology of digitization (Delclós). My relatively new Apple laptop could not access the data designed by Vegas Montaner for del Barco's catalogue, suggesting that the limits of current technology, no matter how much advanced from even ten years ago, still keep potential users from accessing this material, and unfortunately suggests that this database, no matter how valuable, may go the way of the Archive of Microfilmed Hebrew manuscripts and of other similar projects.⁹

Beyond the technical questions regarding the archive's digital architecture/format, and its future in the rapidly changing world of digital technology, are the more philosophical questions of selection and metadata—those markers/identifiers created and entered by the archivists to digitally describe the items, and by which others looking for such a text are able to find it through keyword or similar searches. There is no standard vocabulary used for tagging, identifying, and contextualizing the works presented on the sites discussed above—in Hebrew and other “Jewish languages”—in a way that will consistently help the user who manages to find them to make the connections between these texts and those of other traditions such as the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Turkish, the Greek, the Latin American etc., upon which so much of the work many of us are doing hinges.¹⁰ The *FGP* chose to use the classificatory system of the physical archives in which the texts are currently housed, namely the shel fmark, as their central search term. The criteria for selection for the Hebrew Microfilm Project and del Barco's catalogues both use as their defining criteria the language of the document and the mode of production (hand-written) for selection. The lack not only of a shared systematic and coherent set of selection criteria metadata used by all who digitize is a central problem confronting anyone who hopes for the digital archive.

A counter model that would seem to offer more promise for an imagined archive such as that of the Sephardim that would span many languages, scripts and geographical and temporal boundaries is the *World Digital Library (WDL)*, a project funded by UNESCO. The *WDL* outlines how it uses the concepts of consistency, description of significance, and multilingualism as guides in an effort to produce quality metadata. The *WDL's* focus on making its classificatory descriptors, available in seven languages—

Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish—makes it especially useful when conceiving of a Sephardic archive. In addition, the user can select on the home page a region within which to browse and then further narrow searches within the area by time period and language—including Hebrew, and Ottoman Turkish. However, even such a utopian and broad-minded project that seeks inclusion and that focuses precisely on metadata in an attempt to avoid the problems discussed above and the potential fragmentation to which they could lead, is nevertheless limited by questions of language, script, and funding that have plagued other such projects. Noticeably, several of the languages of the Sephardim, such as Hebrew, Turkish, and Greek, are not among the seven languages represented in the metadata encoding. Archivists and librarians across the world are currently struggling with such problems—aware that such choices inherently privilege some texts, some readers, some constituents, and displace others (Smith).

While metadata is the end result of a series of selections made by the archivist to describe and make accessible items in a digital archive, the selection process determining which items to mark with metadata, and ultimately to digitize, is yet another way in which digital archives become “highly mediated creations that are influenced . . . by archivists’ views of what is valuable or interesting,” thus expressing and reinforcing more traditional categories of value (Hedstrom 41). Beyond judgments about value, other criteria used to determine an artifact’s suitability for digitization include the quality of its existing metadata, i.e. how well it has already been described (“Moving Theory into Practice”). As we have seen in examples such as del Barco’s catalogues or the *FGP*, many Sephardic texts can be fragile, fragmentary, and lack complete contextual

information, and so, according to these guidelines, would not be a high priority for digitization. Potentially important texts from the Sephardic tradition have remained in archives across the globe undesignated as such, often mislabeled, or simply included in catch all generalizations such as “miscellanies.”¹¹ Many of the texts included in the collections described above are the texts that, although they have slipped through the cracks of national or institutional (Spanish, papal, Arabic, or even Jewish) archives, have nevertheless been found, even if suffering from lack of descriptors or mislabeling. Far more difficult are those texts authored by Sephardic Jews but that have no overt material markers of Jewish/Sephardic identity (such as the use of Hebrew, for example). What is the fate of texts composed and recorded in Spanish, for example, that do not openly engage a Sephardic theme or subject?¹²

Some of the most prominent existing collections of recognized Sephardic materials—those that house the artifacts that could most easily become the basis of a Sephardic digital archive—are found in collections that are the result of the type of mediation Hedstrom describes above. Such is the case, for example, with the Palatina library in Parma, the Vatican Library, and the Montefiore Collection in London. After being microfilmed, much of the latter, which was funded by Moses Montefiore for the Judith Lady Montefiore College he founded in honor of his wife in 1869, was sold at auction by Sotheby’s in 2004 in order to raise money to continue to support the college (“Montefiore Collections”). The Palatina collection of Hebrew manuscripts was originally part of the collection of some 1,500 manuscripts belonging to the Hebraist, Giovanni De Rossi, and as such was shaped by his interests in theology and philosophy (Golb; Tamani). Similarly, the Spanish Real Academia de la Historia received large

personal collections of historical manuscripts, such as those of Luis de Salazar y Castro (1658-1734) and Juan Bautista Muñoz, as well as the collection of the Arabist Pascual de Gayangos (*Real Academia*; Ortega Monasterio 2: 44-46). The needs and tastes of the Spanish monarchy are reflected in the collections of both the Spanish Biblioteca del Palacio Nacional and the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial (*Real Biblioteca*; Ortega Monasterio 1: 21, 34). The sixteenth-century Hebrew scholar, Benito Arias Montano, who edited the second polyglot Bible (Antwerp, 1572), was later named librarian of Felipe II's new Escorial library and commissioned copies of Hebrew manuscripts housed in the Vatican library for the Spanish collection (Ortega Monasterio 1: 42). Arias Montano also left his own library, containing some 27 Hebrew manuscripts, to El Escorial. The manuscript collections (including Hebrew) of the BNE grew with additions of personal collections such as those of Gaspar Ibáñez de Segovia, Marqués de Mondejar, and Juan Pacheco Téllez Girón, 4th Duke of Uceda (Ortega Monasterio 2: 20-21).¹³ The collection of Moses Friedland, which contains works by Maimonides, Ibn Gabirol, and al-Harizi, have similarly been incorporated into the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg (Loewinger, et al.; Richler, "Microfilming" 66). One of the most impressive of private collections, the David Guenzburg Collection of some 1,900 mostly medieval Hebrew manuscripts, was incorporated into the Russian National Library after 1917 (Richler, "Microfilming"). Important collections in the United States that include significant numbers of Sephardic manuscripts include the Jewish Theological Seminary, many of which were microfilmed as part of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew manuscripts (those of the Genizah collection have additionally been included in the *FGP*), and the

Bibliotheca Schoenbergensis, the collection of illustrated medieval and early modern manuscripts of Lawrence Schoenberg, a member of the Library of the University of Pennsylvania's Board of Overseers (Ryan).

Solution

Because of the diasporic nature of the Sephardim we have inherited a fragmented archive. The selection criteria and inherent fragmentation of metadata required by any digitization process can lead to further fragmentation instead of achieving the potential unity that many of the projects discussed above have as a goal. As scholars, the users of the archive, we can help to mitigate this by being aware of the potential of very real loss in the digital sea, that can be, in part, a consequence of archival decisions being made based upon older epistemic habits that may not necessarily reflect those of us working in the field. While it was at this point in a much earlier version of the essay that I proverbially threw up my hands and pondered gloomily how the technical and practical obstacles to a digital Sephardic archive would doom the scholar of Sephardic texts to a Quixotic quest in search of texts that increasingly disappeared—relegated to corners of increasingly under-utilized physical archives—as all knowledge moves online. However, as a careful reader of this earlier version pointed out, instead of such pessimism it would be more helpful to offer suggestions on what scholars with a vested interest in having a digital Sephardic archive could do.

As critics and intellectuals, we are and will be working with texts that are housed in physical archives or increasingly available digitally thanks to the intellectual and capital investment of those archives. According to Margaret Hedstrom,

Materials that are discoverable and accessible remotely will enjoy more use than their physical counterparts, because remote access removes barriers of distance and time. If remote access becomes the predominant way in which most users discover archives and interact with their contents, then the on-line collection becomes *the* collection for many users. (41)

By looking at potential models such as the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts and the *Freidberg Project*, as well as the projects discussed above, and the inherited narratives under which they are still operating, we can begin to look at reading these archives as Stoler, and Blouin and Rosenberg suggest, against the grain in order to pull out artifacts relevant to those of us working within Sephardic studies, artifacts and texts that may have been lost in the corners, even in this age of digitization and its potential. Examining how traces of the Sephardic past figure into the categories and classificatory systems archivists are currently using to determine value and to prioritize which holdings to digitize is precisely one of the actions that Stoler, et al. advocate. While as scholars we may not have the financial resources that other interest groups may have, nor are we likely ever represent a significant percentage of users of a particular archive. We can, however, talk to the archivists, librarians and publishers who are our professional colleagues, for the problem applies equally in the secondary literature—journals, anthologies, etc., as well as with primary sources, despite the fact that the latter have been the focus of this paper. These colleagues can, at least in some cases, affect the issue of archive and become activists at the deep level, at the level of system and organization.

We can ask them to consider adding the key terms Sephardic and Sephardim to the metadata they are using to organize their collections.

In fact, as with Judeo-Iberian cultural and literary studies, Sephardic studies has long been the purview of scholars that collaborate in their research.¹⁴ Samuel Armistead and Joe Silverman naturally approached and formed long-lasting professional ties with the musicologist Israel Katz in order to adequately explore the songs they recorded among the Sephardim first of Los Angeles, and later in Morocco, Louisiana, and points beyond. The literary historian and Hebraist, Ross Brann has done collaborative work with scholars in Spain (Esperanza Alonso), and the Hebraist and Spanish scholar, Angel Sáenz Badillos' publication record is marked by collaborations of many kinds. Recently, Esperanza Alonso has undertaken a collaborative project on Bibles among the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries that brings together American and Spanish scholars (*Inteleg*). Such a spirit of collaboration will also be central in the creation of a Sephardic digital archive. Those of us interested in earlier Sephardic texts would be well advised to contact archivists and librarians in state and private libraries and convey our interest in digital access to the types of artifacts and the secondary literature we use in our scholarship. In addition, in our studies of these artifacts we can underscore the advantages and benefits of such a virtual archive. Collaboration seems most appropriate for creating a digital archive that brings together the multiple pasts of the Sephardim. Although such an archive (like all archives) will never be comprehensive, given the economic and intellectual constraints of working archivists who find themselves confronted with an unmanageable amount of new material that grows by the minute as well as with ever shrinking institutional budgets, it still offers an

intellectual place where those of us working in the field, confronted by our own increasingly limited travel budgets (and in many cases time for research) could find each other's work and what it helps others to see, namely the historical traces of the Sephardim.

Works Cited

Archivo Digital de Manuscripts y Textos Españoles (ADMYTE). Micronet. 1990-91. CD-ROM and Web in progress. 1 March 2012.

<<http://admyte.com/presentacion.htm>>.

Allony, N., and A. M. Figueras. "Manuscritos hebraicos de la Biblioteca de Montserrat." *Sefarad* 19.2 (1959): 241-72. Print.

Armistead, Samuel, Joseph Silverman, and Israel Katz. *Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.
<<http://www.sephardifolklit.org>>.

---. *Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews*. 3 vols. Berkeley: U of California P, 1972-1994. Print

Baer, Marc David. *The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2009. Print.

Beal, Wesley, and Stacy Lavin. "Theorizing Connectivity: Modernism and the Network Narrative." *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 5.2 (2011). Web. 8 Feb. 2012.

“Bibliography of the Hebrew Book.” New York Public Library, 2012. Web. 29 Feb.

2012. <<http://www.nypl.org/collections/articles-databases/bibliography-hebrew-book>>.

Biblioteca Digital Hispánica. Biblioteca Nacional de España. 2008-. Web. 5 March

2012. <<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/>>.

Blouin, Francis X. Jr., and William G. Rosenberg. *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives*. New York: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.

Borges, Jorge Luis. “La Biblioteca de Babel.” *Obras Completas 1923-1949*. Ed. Rolando Costa Picazo and Irma Zangara. Vol. 1. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2009. 861-66. Print.

Borovaya, Olga. *Modern Ladino Culture: Press, Belles Lettres, and Theater in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2011. Print.

Boyarin, Daniel and Jonathan. “Diaspora: Generation and the Ground of Jewish Identity.” *Critical Inquiry* 19.4 (1993): 693-725. Print.

Castro, Américo. *España en su historia: Cristianos, moros y judíos*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2001. Print.

---. *La Celestina como contienda literaria (castas y casticismo)* Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1965. Print.

Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People Jerusalem (CAHJP). Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <<http://sites.huji.ac.il/>>.

Chartier, Roger. *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Stanford, : Stanford UP, 1994. Print.

Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures 3 (2014): 101-120

Cutter, Charles. *Judaica Reference Sources: A Selective, Annotated Bibliographic Guide*.

Westport: Libraries Unlimited, 2004. Print.

David and Fella Shapell Family Digitization Project. Jewish National University Library.

Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <<http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/ketubbot/>>.

del Barco del Barco, Francisco Javier. *Catálogos de manuscritos hebreos de la*

Comunidad de Madrid. 3 vols. Madrid: CSIC, 2003-06. Print.

Delclós, Tomàs. "La Biblioteca Nacional jubila el microfilme para sus fondos." *El País*.

com. 9 Nov. 2010. Web. 5 Jan. 2012.

Department of Manuscripts & the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts. Jewish

National and University Library. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

<<http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/imhm/>>.

Derrida, Jacques. "Archive Fever." *Diacritics* 25 (1995): 9-63. Print.

Faulhaber, Charles. Message to author. 26 March 2012. E-mail.

FASSAC's Digital Archive of Sephardica. Foundation for the Advancement of Sephardic

Studies and Culture (FASSAC). 1965-2004. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

<<http://www.sephardicstudies.org/das.html>>.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. 1972.

New York: Vintage, 2010. Print.

Friedberg Genizah Project (FGP). Jewish Manuscript Preservation Society. Web. 29

Feb. 2012. <http://www.genizah.org/index_new.aspx>.

Gilman, Stephen. *The Spain of Fernando de Rojas: The Intellectual and Social*

Landscape of La Celestina. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972. Print.

- Golb, Norman. "The De Rossi Collection of Hebrew Manuscripts at the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma and its Importance for Jewish History." Paper delivered at the VIIth Congress of the European Association of Jewish Studies (Amsterdam, 21-25 July 2002). Web. 8 Feb. 2012. <oi.uchicago.edu/pdf/Parma.pdf>.
- "Golden Haggadah - Introduction." *Online Gallery*. The British Library. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/ttp/hagadah/accessible/introduction.html>>.
- González Echevarría, Roberto. *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. Print.
- Graizbord, David. *Souls in Dispute: Converso Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580-1700*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2003. Print.
- Hamilton, Michelle. "Hispanism and Sephardic Studies." *Journal for Medieval Iberian Studies* 2 (2009): 179-94. Print.
- Hedstrom, Margaret. "Archives, Memory, and Interfaces with the Past." *Archival Science* 2.1-2 (2002): 21-43. Web. 11 Nov. 2011.
- Heller, Marvin J. *Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book*. Leiden: Brill, 2008. Print.
- "History and Aims." The Jewish National and University Library. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.jnul.huji.ac.il/eng/history.html>>.
- Hordes, Stanley. *To the End of the Earth: A History of the Crypto-Jews of New Mexico*. New York: Columbia UP, 2005. Print.
- Inteleg*. European Research Council, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. Web. 27 April 2012. <<http://www.lineas.cchs.csic.es/inteleg/>>.

“Inventario general de manuscritos de la Biblioteca Nacional.” Biblioteca Nacional de España and Ministerio de Educación Nacional. Madrid: Dirección General de Archivos y Bibliotecas, 1953- . Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

<[http://www.bne.es/es/Micrositios/Guias/Inventario Manuscritos/](http://www.bne.es/es/Micrositios/Guias/Inventario_Manuscritos/)>.

Israel Genealogical Society. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.isragen.org.il/>>.

Israel, Jonathan. *Diasporas Within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World of Maritime Empires (1540-1740)*. Leiden: Brill, 2002. Print.

Kaplan, Joseph. *Jews and Conversos: Studies in Society and the Inquisition*. Jerusalem: Magnes P, 1985. Print.

Loewinger, David Samuel, Ephraim Kupfer, and Abraham I. Katsh. “Manuscripts, Hebrew.” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 13. Detroit: Macmillan, 2007. 488-95. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Web. 28 Feb. 2012.

Leveen, Jacob, ed. *Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum*. Vol. 4. London: British Museum, 1935. Web. 5 March 2012.

Loewinger, David Samuel, Ephraim Kupfer, and Abraham I. Katsh. “Manuscripts, Hebrew.” *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 13. Detroit: Macmillan, 2007. 488-95. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Web. 28 Feb. 2012.

Mandragore: Base des manuscrits enluminés de la BnF. Bibliothèque nationale de France. Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <http://mandragore.bnf.fr/jsp/rechercheExperte.jsp>

Margoliouth, G. *Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the British Museum*. 3 vols. London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1899-1915. Print.

Melammed, Renée Levine. *A Question of Identity: Iberian Conversos in Historical Perspective*. Oxford UP, 2004. Print.

“Montefiore Collections.” The Montefiore Endowment. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

<<http://www.montefioreendowment.org.uk/collections/about/manuscripts/>>.

Moving Theory into Practice: Digital Imaging Tutorial. Cornell University

Library/Research Department. 2000-03. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

<<http://www.library.cornell.edu/preservation/tutorial/selection/selection-02.html>>.

National Sephardic Library. American Sephardi Foundation. 2010-. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.

<<http://sephardiclibrary.org/library.html>>.

Netanyahu, Benzion. *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain*. New York: Random House, 1995. Print.

Ortega Monasterio, María Teresa. “Las bibliotecas y sus manuscritos hebreos.” *del Barco del Barco* 1: 17-55; 2: 19-62. Print.

Real Academia de la Historia. Benefactores de la Real Academia de la Historia. Web. 27 Apr. 2012. <<http://www.rah.es/biblioteca.htm>>.

Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial. Patrimonio Nacional. Web. 27 Apr. 2012. <<http://rbme.patrimonionacional.es/>>.

Richler, Benjamin. “Microfilming Hebrew Manuscripts in Eastern Europe.” *Judaica in the Slavic Realm, Slavica in the Judaic Realm: Repositories, Collections, Projects, Publications*. Ed. Zachary M. Baker. Binghamton: Haworth, 2003. 59-68. Print.

- . "Editor's Introduction." *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*. Jerusalem: Hebrew U and Jewish National and University Library: 2001. xv-xviii. Print.
- Rothstein, Edward. "A Lifetime's Collection of Texts in Hebrew, at Sotheby's." *New York Times*. Feb 12, 2009. Web. 6 January 2012.
- Ryan, Michael. "Introduction: Bibliotheca Schoenbergensis." University of Pennsylvania. 24 Feb. 2011. Web. 27 April 2012.
<http://www.library.upenn.edu/exhibits/rbm/schoenberg/schoenberg_exintro2.html>
- Salgado, Daniel. "Bibliotecas del futuro: El difícil adiós del universo Gutenberg." *El País Digital*. Web. 5 Jan. 2012.
- Sassón-Henry, Perla. *Borges 2.0: From Text to Virtual Worlds*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007. Print.
- Schmelzer, Menahem. "Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books Among the Sephardim Before and After the Expulsion." *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World 1391-1648*. Ed. Benjamin R. Gampel. New York: Columbia UP, 1997. 257-66. Print.
- Sefriyah ha-L'umit*. National Library of Israel. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.
<<http://aleph.nli.org.il>>.
- The Sephardi Studies Project*. Taube Center for Jewish Studies. Stanford University. Web. 29 Feb. 2012.
<<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/jewishstudies/programs/sephardi/index.html>>

Shetty, Sandhya, and Elizabeth J. Bellamy. "Postcolonialism's Archive Fever."

Diacritics 30.1 (2000): 25-48. Print.

Silverblatt, Irene. *Modern Inquisitions: Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World*. Durham NC: Duke UP, 2004. Print.

Smith, Abby. "Mapping the Preservation Landscape." *Access in the Future Tense*.

Council on Library and Information Resources, 2004. 1-8. Web. 4 March 2012..

Stoler, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton UP, 2009. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the subaltern speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1988. 271-313. Print.

Swetschinski, Daniel S. "The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam: Cultural Continuation and Adaptation." *Essays in Modern Jewish History*. Ed. Frances Malino and Phyllis C. Albert. New York: Herzel, 1982. 56-80. Print.

Tamani, Giuliano. "The History of the Collection." *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma*. Jerusalem: Hebrew U and Jewish National and University Library, 2001. xix-xxvii. Print.

Vegas Montaner, Luis. "El catálogo informatizado." del Barco del Barco1: 79-93.

Wacks, David. "Conflicted Identity and Colonial Adaptation in Petrus Alfonsi's *Dialogus contra judaeos* and *Disciplina clericalis*." *Marginal Voices: Studies in Converso Literature of Medieval and Golden Age Spain*. Ed. Amy Aronson-Friedman and Gregory Kaplan. Leiden: Brill, 2012. Print.

World Digital Library. Unites Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Web. 29 Feb. 2012. <<http://www.wdl.org/>>.

Yovel, Yirmiyahu. *The Other Within, The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2009. Print.

¹ Special thanks to the organizers (Dalia Kandiyoti and Sarah Casteel) and participants in the Sephardic Symposium at CUNY Graduate School November 11, 2011 who listened to a preliminary version of this paper and who responded with valuable comments and suggestions. Also thanks to my colleagues and mentors Ana Paula Ferreira for expediting my access to Derrida's study in translation and to Charles Faulhaber for reading earlier versions of this paper.

² See, for example, Yovel; Melammed; Graizbord; Wacks; and Netanyahu.

³ The remote user of the BNE catalogue who wishes to search the comprehensive Arabic or Hebrew texts in the archive must visit the Sala Cervantes and consult the physical catalogues there. The 1959 Inventory of the BNE's manuscripts available in PDF contains only items in Latin, or Romance vernacular ("Inventario"). There is no online access to virtual images of these collections.

⁴ For a print description of the Hebrew manuscripts in the British library, see Margoliouth; and Leveen.

⁵ Other Sephardic texts are found in smaller private collections that have not been made available digitally and many of their owners have formed the collection around personal (not scholarly) criteria, for example, the Jack V. Lunzer's Valmadonna collection of Hebrew texts that contains many early printed manuscripts from the Sephardic communities of Italy, Amsterdam and even Morocco, but whose owner admittedly had no interest in Hebrew books from the Americas (Rothstein).

⁶ *FGP* is operating as a joint venture with the Jewish Manuscript Preservation Society of Toronto, Canada. The Project offers users access to digital manuscript images, transcriptions, catalogues and bibliography.

⁷ The Microfilm Project focuses on manuscripts. On Early Modern Hebrew books, see Cutter; Heller; and Schmelzer. On early print Sephardic (non-Hebrew) books, see Borovaya. See also the *Sephardi Studies Project* at Stanford and the "Bibliography of the Hebrew Book," which includes Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino books 1469-1960.

⁸ See, for example, Allony and Figueras' study of the Hebrew manuscripts of the Abbey of Montserrat Library (Allony and Figueras).

⁹ I tried unsuccessfully several times to subscribe to the *Archivo Digital de Manuscritos y Textos Españoles (ADMYTE)* through the new online site. Such was the fate of *ADMYTE* that contained in CD-ROM format a database, transcriptions, and 61 manuscript facsimiles of medieval vernacular Iberian texts, but whose technology made it unusable

for the scholar without access to either a microfilm reader in the case of the former or to an old PC that runs early versions of MS Windows in the case of the latter. An attempt has been made to make the updated database of both *ADMYTE* I and II of some 290 works accessible via the web.

¹⁰ The Library of Congress standard for metadata has been adopted by the national archives of European Union members, and these are best practices adopted for the cataloguing of current and future material, but does not mean that all old catalogue entries will be changed, or that independent collections will adopt such practices (Salgado).

¹¹ For example, the collection of the Castilian humanist, Diego Hurtado, whose personal library was acquired by the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de El Escorial in the sixteenth century, and, when catalogued by del Barco, et al., was found to contain an item previously catalogued as one Hebrew manuscript but which was actually a file that contained fragments of four independent items (1: 44). Another example is Parma 2666, which is classified, even in Malachi Beit-Arié's modern description as a "philosophical miscellany" yet it contains several profane poetic works.

¹² Within Spanish Studies there has been in fact much debate regarding some scholars' attempts to make claims regarding an author's identity based on the content of his works, see for example the work of Stephen Gilman on the *Celestina*. Perhaps the best-known (and most polemical) of such studies are those of Américo Castro, who claims a Jewish perspective for works by authors such as Luis Vives and Fernando de Rojas (*España en su historia* 646-52, 544; *La Celestina como contienda*).

¹³ Other Sephardic texts are found in smaller private collections that have not been made available digitally and many of their owners have formed the collection around personal (not scholarly) criteria, for example, Jack V. Lunzer's Valmadonna collection of Hebrew texts that contained (it was auctioned by Southeby's in 2009) many early printed manuscripts from the Sephardic communities of Italy, Amsterdam and even Morocco, but whose owner admittedly had no interest in Hebrew books from the Americas (Rothstein).

¹⁴ On collaboration in Sephardic Studies, see Hamilton, "Hispanism and Sephardic Studies."