

LEARNING

Bibliographic Instruction in Judaic Studies

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Introduction

The Judaic studies program at Brandeis is an ambitious one, with courses offered in a variety of fields. Undergraduates and graduate students are encouraged to enroll in courses outside their field of specialty. The faculty of the Near Eastern and Judaic Studies Department felt that a necessary part of educating students was the development of their research skills. They understood that students must be taught how to obtain needed information without always having to turn to librarians for assistance. After acquiring such skills, later, as professionals, they would be better able to guide their own students in research projects. I was therefore asked to build and teach an introductory course that would familiarize students with bibliographic and reference sources and help them acquire basic research skills in Judaica.

Course Design

The course is divided into three components:

1. introduction and orientation;
2. general bibliographic and reference sources; and
3. subject bibliographic and reference sources.

1. The introduction/orientation sessions are used to explain the nature and purpose of the course and to provide orientation to the library and its resources. As part of the orientation, the student visits both the general reference department and the Judaica reading room to become familiar with the materials housed in these collections. They are also instructed in the use of the card catalog, the Hebraica title catalog, the periodical catalog, and the library's online user information system (LOUIS). In addition, a member of the general reference staff discusses computerized literature searching and demonstrates the library's retrieval service. Brandeis currently subscribes to the BRS and DIALOG online information services, which provide access to over 175 databases.

2. Once the students are generally familiar with the library and its resources, they are introduced to specific Judaic biblio-

graphic and reference sources. These include: comprehensive general Judaica bibliographies; indexes to both current and retrospective Judaica periodicals; indexes to Judaica festschriften; general Judaica encyclopedias; and catalogs/bibliographies of books, manuscripts, and library collections.

3. It is expected that by the end of the first half of the semester, students will have become adept at using the card catalog, online catalog, and general Judaica reference tools, as well as some general reference materials. The remaining sessions are devoted to discussions pertaining to specific subject-related bibliographic and reference sources. The students enrolled in the course determine which subjects are to be emphasized to ensure that their research skills are strengthened in their area of specialty. Among the topics covered are: Biblical studies; Rabbinic literature and Jewish law; Jewish thought (including mysticism and Hasidism); Jewish history; Hebrew language and literature; Yiddish language and literature; and Jewish archival institutions and their publications.

The goal in the latter part of the semester is to familiarize the students with bibliographies, encyclopedias, concordances, biographical and bio-bibliographical dictionaries, as well as periodicals that are germane to the discipline being discussed.

A text entitled *Introduction to Jewish Bibliography*¹ was compiled for this course. It includes the required readings for each topic, a list of the major works to be discussed in the lecture, and weekly assignments.

Methodology

Each session consists of demonstration, evaluation, and discussion of bibliographic and reference tools related to a predetermined topic, e.g., periodical indexes or Biblical studies resources. The most significant characteristics of each work are pointed out in the course of the lecture: purpose, authoritativeness, scope, arrangement, indexes, and other special features. The students have ample opportunity to examine the materials and discuss their use. For ex-

ample, in discussing resources for Biblical studies, students consult and note the differences between *Biblia Hebraica* edited by R. Kittel² and the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* edited by K. Elliger and W. Rudolph.³ They also observe the structural differences between, and contrast the purposes of the following:

Mandelkern, Solomon. *Konkordantsyah La-TaNaKH*.⁴

Even-Shoshan, Abraham. *Konkordantsyah hadashah le-Torah, Nevi'im u-Khetuvim*.⁵

Likewise, during our discussion of Rabbinic literature resources, students are given an opportunity to use a wide array of dictionaries, concordances, encyclopedias, and bibliographies, including such works as:

Hyman, Aaron. *Torah ha-ketuvah v'ha-mesurah*.⁶

Kasowski, Chaim Joshua. *Otsar leshon ha-Talmud*.⁷

Entsiklopedyah Talmudit.⁸

Rakover, Nahum. *Otsar ha-mishpat*.⁹

Kasher, Menahem M. *Sare ha-efef*.¹⁰

When we discuss resources pertaining to Hebrew linguistics and literature, the students learn when and how to use dictionaries for both etymological studies or textual analysis.

The most important sources examined are:

Ben-Yehudah, Eliezer. *Milon ha-lashon ha-'ivrit*.¹¹

Even-Shoshan, Abraham. *ha-Milon he-hadash*.¹²

In the discussion of historical resources, the student is familiarized with a variety of surveys, anthologies containing historical documents or texts, and regional (local) historical bibliographies, including such works as:

Ben-Sasson, H. H. *A history of the Jewish people*.¹³

The Jew in the modern world; a documentary history. Edited by Paul R. Mendes Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz.¹⁴

Gross, Heinrich. *Gallia Judaica*.¹⁵

Klausner, Israel. *Toldot ha-tsiyonut*.¹⁶

Gurock, Jeffrey. *American Jewish history; a bibliographic guide*.¹⁷

In view of the fact that archival materials are a primary source for the study of Jewish history in the various countries in which Jews have resided, works which describe archival collections and identify their location are also discussed.

Prior to the lecture, students are assigned readings that either evaluate specific types of reference tools, or present an overview of the literature in the field to be discussed. Thus, for example, prior to discussing indices, the students read the relevant chapter in *A History and Guide to Judaic Bibliography* by Shimeon Brisman.¹⁸ They read "Rabbinic Sources" by John Townsend and "Judaism in New Testament Times" by Richard Bavier before our discussion of Rabbinic literature resources. These articles are in the compilation of bibliographic essays entitled *The Study of Judaism*.¹⁹

Following each session, students are assigned reference questions designed to give them an opportunity to put into practice what they have learned. They find that this exercise affords them an opportunity to familiarize themselves with tools that they will later use in research projects.

The following are some typical assignments.

- I. a. Compile a selective bibliography of books and articles pertaining to Saadia Gaon and his works by consulting the following sources:
Shunami, Shlomo. *Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies and Supplement*.²⁰
Berlin, Charles. *Index to festschriften in Jewish Studies*.²¹
Marcus, Jacob Rader and Bilgray, Albert. *An index to Jewish festschriften*.²²
Index of articles on Jewish studies.²³
- b. Note which items are in the library's collection.

The purpose of this exercise is three-fold: to give students an opportunity to (1) use some of the basic bibliographies and indexes for the preparation of a bibliography; (2) review the methodology of compiling a bibliography in accordance with the format outlined in standard style manuals; and (3) become more adept at using card and on-line catalogs.

- II. Moses ben Solomon of Salerno's work *Perush 'al Moreh Nevukhim* is in manuscript.

- a. Note the holding library/libraries of the Mss.
- b. Cite publications, if any, relating to this work.

- III. a. Describe the contents of the following work: Abraham Bar Hiyya ha-Nasi. *Hegyon ha-Nefesh*.
- b. Note the differences between the editions.
- c. List the editions owned by the following libraries: Brandeis, Hebrew Union College—Klau Library, New York Public Library—Jewish Division, the Library of Congress, and Harvard.

In view of the fact that many graduate students enrolled in the course may be working with manuscripts and will need to compare text editions, they must learn to use such tools as:

Freimann, Aaron. *Union catalog of Hebrew manuscripts and their location*.²⁴

Benjamin, Isaac. *Otsar ha-sefarim*.²⁵

Slatkine, Mendel. *Otsar ha-sefarim. Helek sheni*.²⁶

Students are also required to become familiar with the holdings of the major repositories of Judaica and to learn to use their respective book catalogs. Questions II and III are examples of exercises designed to develop this facility.

Finally, the formal classroom instruction described above is supplemented, as the need arises, by informal meetings with individual students to discuss their assignments and to provide guidance for their term projects.

The term project, too, is aimed at strengthening student research skills. Students are required to compile a detailed, annotated bibliography pertaining to a topic in their field of study. An essay describing the search strategy and the materials used to compile the bibliography must accompany the paper. "The American Jewish community's response to events in Europe, 1939-1944" and "The Jews in Vilna in the interwar period" are two examples of bibliographies compiled by students who have completed this course.

Final Exam

The final exam is designed to measure the growth of research skills. Students are required to answer a variety of reference questions and to indicate the source(s) used to find the answer. Examples of exam questions, along with comments on the skills they are designed to test, follow:

- I. "Hashem ro'i lo ehesar"
 - a. What is the biblical source of this verse?

- b. Where and in what context does Rashi cite this verse?

Students are expected to know that they must use a concordance to find the biblical source of this verse. They should also know that Aaron Hyman's *Torah ha-ketuvah veha-mesurah* will be an invaluable source in helping locate biblical references in rabbinic and other types of post-biblical literature.

- II. List the works of Ibn Gabirol that were published from manuscript in the following periodicals:

- a. *Otsar Nehmad*.
- b. *Kerem Hemed*.

Students should know that information regarding Hebrew newspapers and periodicals is to be found in the index volume of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.²⁷ Once they have established the place and date of publication, they should know to consult Bernhard Wachstein's *Die hebräische Publizistik in Wien*,²⁸ which provides indexing for certain Hebrew periodicals published in Vienna between 1820 and 1889.

- III. A dissertation pertaining to the religious and political thought of Paul de Lagarde was published in 1979. Cite.

Students should be aware that *Kiryat Sefer*²⁹ lists not only monographs, but also dissertations of Judaic interest.

Conclusion

This article has described the Judaica bibliography course as currently taught at Brandeis University. Students who have enrolled in it have been Judaica concentrators, both undergraduate and graduate. All have felt that the course was an extremely practical and beneficial experience, because it gave them an opportunity to become more familiar with the kinds of materials that will enable them to conduct research more effectively. The Brandeis experience clearly demonstrates the importance of an introductory course in Judaica bibliography to both undergraduate and graduate programs in Jewish Studies.

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