

ISRAEL

JEWISH NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

PROFESSOR YORAM TSAFRIR — DIRECTOR

ANNUAL REPORT TO CDNL 2001 – 2002

STATUS

The JNUL serves as the national library of the State of Israel, embracing the cultural legacies of all sectors of its population. As the national library of the Jewish people living outside the State of Israel, it collects books, manuscripts and every variety of non-book material pertaining to Jewish history and culture in the Diaspora. It is also the main humanities research library of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (since the latter's establishment in 1925), and in addition performs some of the functions of a public library. The hybrid nature of JNUL's status has in some ways hampered the proper fulfilment of its role as a true National Library. During the last year the first steps were taken to set in motion the re-creation of the Library as an independent body, albeit with close links to the Hebrew University, that would undertake all the functions of a modern National Library. A new building is to be erected in addition to the present one which will be revamped to meet the needs of the 21st century.

LEGAL DEPOSIT

The 1953 Legal Deposit Law, which until now covered only printed books, was renewed to include other formats - sound, film, digital, etc. Further amendments are also being processed, though the subject of on-line media has yet to be addressed, as has the problem of funding the processing of these items. During 2001 some 14,000 Israeli published books and 1500 new serials were added to the Library's collection. In addition current serials acquired through legal deposit amounted to over 10,000.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Books and new periodicals acquired through purchase or gifts amounted to nearly 32,000. 8,000 current serials, subscribed to by means of standing orders (not legal deposit) were received. The Library also received some 680 Manuscripts and archival items.

DIGITIZATION PROJECTS

The first completed project, displaying the Library's collection of hundreds of ketubbot (marriage contracts) is now accessible via the JNUL's home page (<http://jnul.huji.ac.il>). Scanning is underway of historic maps of Jerusalem from the Laor Collection, of Jewish communal records (starting with those of Frankfurt am Main), and of a number of important Talmudic manuscripts. Other projects aiming to provide the public with greater ease of access to some of the Library's unique treasures are being planned. Digitization of the National Sound Archives is underway and a selection of musical items marking various Jewish festivals may now be accessed from the Library's home-page.

PRESERVATION

The Library's Rare Book Collection is kept in a special storage area with appropriate conditions for temperature and humidity control. This area was enlarged during last year. In addition the Restoration and Conservation Department was renovated, and working conditions improved. Microfilming of rare or fragile items is at present still the preferred method of the Library for preservation purposes, and this is done routinely for readers requesting access to rare books, in order to prevent superfluous handling. With the purchase of new scanning equipment readers' needs will also be met by increased use of digitisation. In process are microfilming projects in conjunction with Harvard College Library, enabling the library to film the archives of the various Kibbutz movements, local newspapers and Israeli doctoral dissertations. Some 800, 000 frames are produced annually.

EJOURNALS

Access to thousands of full-text electronic journals, and databases is available to patrons of the JNUL by virtue of the Hebrew University's membership in MALMAD, the Israel Center for Digital Information Services. Its on-line catalogue can be reached from the JNUL's home-page.

RETROACTIVE CONVERSION OF THE CATALOGUE

Computerized current cataloguing using the ALEPH system began in 1983. Until recently, financial constraints rendered systematic retroactive conversion impossible. With the help of a generous donation a project for full-scale conversion of all Hebrew, Arabic and Cyrillic character records as well as the Judaica section of the European language catalog, was inaugurated in 1999. This year the conversion of the Hebrew catalog was completed (using an in-house team). Some 70.000 records in European languages received via OCLC Retrocon were added; another approximately 60, 000 (non-matching records) are being keyed-in. However the project is unlikely to be completed without a further infusion of funds.

PUBLICATIONS

Volumes 71 and 72 of the bibliographic quarterly Kiryat Sefer were published, at present in printed form only. The Periodical Index of Jewish Studies (RAMBI) will no longer appear in print, having been transferred to on-line format (ALEPH-500), with the added aim of providing access to full-text of the articles. The Library published the catalogue: Hebrew Manuscripts in the Biblioteca Palatina in Parma, edited by Benjamin Richler.

CULTURAL EVENTS

The traveling exhibition "Alberrr Einstein, Man of the Century" was shown in various locations in Australia; the internet site under the same title was also renovated and is widely used. The JNUL ' s exhibition "Treasures Revealed", first opened in 2000 was extended until the end of 2001.

Two concerts were organized in honor of composers whose archives have been deposited in the Library.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The JNUL was given observer status in the European Union project LEAF.

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