

Association of Jewish Libraries General Membership Meeting

Monday, June 19, 2023

Virtual meeting

Agenda

The meeting began at 3:30 PM Eastern Time.

Michelle Margolis, AJL President, began the meeting. She thanked all the presenters, speakers, and moderators for their contributions to this year's conference. Michelle noted that most of the conference sessions are being recorded.

1. Michelle called for a vote to approve last year's meeting minutes. The minutes were approved.
2. Aaron Taub provided the RAS Division summary. He began with the cataloging committee report. Many issues were discussed at their recent meeting including a Christian bias in LC subject headings and "droppable" words. At their meeting, Haim Gottschalk discussed a books on books lecture series and a program on the Soviet Jewish bookshelf. At their meeting, Eitan Kensky discussed the Reference and Bibliography Awards. Rachel Leket-Mor gave a report on *Judaica Librarianship*. Aaron gave a special shout out to Nancy Sack for her editorial work. Lastly, there was a rich discussion about how best to acquire Israeli streaming services.
3. Rebecca Levitan provided an SSCPL update. Their division had a membership meeting during which Shaindy Kurtzman presented accreditation awards. Rebecca is encouraging everyone to buy AJL seals. She is encouraging everyone to attend advocacy and handbook sessions. Jo Taylor Marshall had updates to share about the writer's strike is affecting the Sydney Taylor show.
4. Michelle said that this has been an amazing year for AJL. She gave credit to past President, Kathy Bloomfield, for making AJL sustainable financially. In addition, Jackie Benefraim and Jerry Krautman have done exceptional work in terms of endowments.
 - A. *Judaica Librarianship* has been endowed by an anonymous donor and is now completely open access and online.

- B. Our keynote address will hence be known as the Shirley Epstein AJL Keynote Address. The endowment is named for a retired bank librarian. We are grateful to Rivka Yerushalmi for funding this gift.
 - C. Barbara Young Leff, the former director of the Stephen S. Wise Temple Library in Los Angeles and AJL member, passed away last year. She left a gift in her will to support a unique training and mentorship program for SSCPL members. Thanks to Sean Boyle for providing details of the program.
 - D. Two \$20,000 donations were received to support the Donna and Richard Harris Jewish libraries, archives, and collections around the world.
 - E. Following the 2022 passing of Dr. Menahem Schmelzer, librarian at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), there is a newly named fund to support Judaica librarianship. Haim Gottschalk conceived of and provided the seed money for this fund. Everyone is welcome to contribute to it.
5. Michelle congratulated Anthony Catanese, this year's recipient of the AJL scholarship award, who is completing his master's degree at the University of Buffalo. He will judge the AJL virtual conference background contest this year.
6. Finance update: Michelle said we are in the best fiscal position that we have been in for many years. We are working to endow other awards. If you are interested in establishing an award, please be in touch with Michelle, Jackie, or Jerry.
7. Current membership statistics:
- Total membership = 426
 - Members living in Israel = 7
 - Members living in Canada = 17
 - Members residing in other countries = 17
8. Michelle noted that the AJL Board and Council passed the annual budget last week. Thank you to our treasurer, Andrew Lillien, for his preparation and presentation of the budget.
9. Many thanks to Sharon Benamou and her committee for their hard work on membership. The membership year runs from October 1 through September 30. In the fall, we plan to have a membership gala.
10. There was a brief mention of the highlights of virtual programs this past year focusing on synagogue archives, a kidlit showcase, and roundtables on virtual collections.

11. Partnerships: We are partnering with the Museum of Jewish Heritage and co-leading a project with NLI on developing a white paper on practical guidance to libraries related to Judaica provenance.
12. Together with JTS, there is a new certification program in RAS Training in Judaica Librarianship. The first class in the program on the topic of cataloging has been completed. There will be a summer course on collection development. There are 15 participants in this learning program from around the world. For further information, contact librarianship@jtsa.edu.
13. President Biden has made a statement and written document on combatting anti-Semitism in which libraries are featured prominently. AJL is working on becoming involved in this initiative.
14. Zachary Baker presented the 2023 Fanny Goldstein Merit Award to Rachel Leket-Mor. Since 2012, Rachel has edited our journal, *Judaica Librarianship*. She led the transition from the print to digital format. Rachel gave a brief acceptance speech.
15. Jerry Krautman described the library portal on the AJL website. This is the third year of the library portal. At present, nine institutions are involved. There is no charge for an institution to be included. Jerry showed photos of the AJU portal from the website. Jerry said he can assemble one institution's showcase within about three hours. Michelle encouraged members to reach out to Jerry for inclusion and support.
16. Lisa Silverman commented that she and Joy Kingsolver are working on the AJL archives. Lisa took over Barbara Leff's collection, which will be housed at Hebrew Union College's American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. The AJL Archive includes Ralph Taylor's speech on the Body of Work Award granted posthumously to his late wife, Sydney.
17. There was a brief discussion of the difference between the AJL Portal vs. the Directory. The Directory is self-generated. Jackie explained that an institution's library staff must be a member of AJL, but this is not the case for inclusion in the Directory.
18. Sheryl Stahl noted the Nice Jewish Books podcasts available on Amazon and other platforms. Heidi mentioned that her Book of Life podcasts mostly deal with Jewish kidlit. Heidi also noted that Jewish heritage posters and bookmarks are available for purchase through ALA.

19. Elliot Gertel mentioned that Linda Lerman, former AJL President from 1990-1992, passed away about two weeks ago. She had been a Judaica librarian at Yale, NYU, and Norwalk Community College.
20. Rachel Leket-Mor thanked those who helped place *Judaica Librarianship* online and supplied metadata for the project. Now, there are guest editor opportunities for all who are interested.
21. Joyce Levine commented on an important piece of AJL history. She discussed that Miriam Likend co-founded the Jewish Library Association in 1962. She took this action, in part, because ALA and SLA did not accept a separate Jewish Libraries section.
22. Upcoming ALA Conference – Our visibility within ALA has improved significantly, thanks to Emily Bergman and Sally Stieglitz. There will be over half a dozen Jewish-related programs at ALA this year, including a second annual President’s program on Jews in genre fiction. AJL will host an ALA shmooze and nosh there. Sally sent a list of these Jewish programs to Hasafran.
23. The next AJL Conference is scheduled for June 24-26, 2024 in San Diego. The Conference chairs are Rachin Kamin and Kathy Bloomfield. Michelle encouraged everyone to enjoy our virtual conference.
24. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Rivka Yerushalmi