

Shelf Journeys: Recent Acquisitions

By Elliot H. Gertel

A Chief Rabbi's letters from Jerusalem...colorful images of Esther from Paris...Russian language Jewish newspapers from Saint Petersburg...these are just a few of the items that found a new home in the University Library in Ann Arbor.



Queen Esther from Le livre d'Esther illustrated by Arthur Szyk, text by Robert Schmidt (Paris: L'édition d'art H. Piazza, 1925). (Images on this page courtesy of the Special Collections Library, University of Michigan)

thanks go to the Brandts and also to Susan Weidman Schneider, editor of *Lilith*, for donating books that had originally belonged to the magazine.

The papers of Rabbi Yehudah Leib Levin (1862-1926) of Detroit are now part of the Special Collections Library thanks to the generosity of his grandchildren, Judith Levin Cantor, Dr. Joseph H. Levin, and Miriam Friedman. This



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resource will be especially significant for researchers in rabbinics and theology, as well as local Jewish history and mathematics. Frankel Center Director Zvi Gitelman played a key role in obtaining this gift. Rabbi Levin's papers include notebooks, photos, patent papers on the adding machine that he invented—now in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC—his published sermons, and correspondence—notably a letter from Israel's famous Chief Rabbi, Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935).

The Special Collections Library is also the new home for some of the more than 850 items from the Leo W. Schwarz collection donated by the University of Iowa. Schwarz (1906-1967) was visiting professor of Judaic studies at Iowa from 1961-1963, a writer, editor, lecturer, and a director of the Joint Distribution Committee in Germany for several years after World War II. The material includes some rare editions dating to the sixteenth century, biblical commentaries, books on the Holocaust, and materials published in Germany after the war for use in displaced persons camps.

Continuing to build our collection of works illustrated by Arthur Szyk, we are grateful to Martha Bindeman, a loyal donor, for her contribution towards purchasing *Le livre d'Esther*, a rare limited edition of Szyk's beautifully illustrated version of the Book of Esther published in Paris in 1925.

The Midrasha Library (Southfield) Yiddish collection has been making its way here as the result of a gift by the Library at Michigan State University where the books presently reside.

We have just purchased the *Bund Archive* (2,162 microfiches) which complements the *Poalei Zion Archives* we acquired from 1999-2000. The *Bund Archive* includes material from the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History in Moscow in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, French, and German. Topics covered include Eastern European Jewish history; Jewish labor and political movements; Yiddish language and culture in Russia; and socialist movements and revolutionary parties in Russia and Europe.

We have added the weekly edition of the Russian language Jewish newspaper, *Voskhod* (nine microfilm reels), published in Saint Petersburg between 1882 and 1906 and are adding other Russian-language Judaica as well.

"Biscuits Froumine," display ad of L. Froumine and Sons, Jerusalem, from The Palestine Directory and Handbook 1926 edited by Isaiah Pevsner, (Tel-Aviv: Mischar W'Taasia, 1926) from the Leo W. Schwarz Collection

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From the Lower East Side to the Diag: A Yiddish Archive Finds a Home in Michigan

By Anita Norich, Associate Professor of English Language and Literature and Judaic Studies

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Yiddish press in New York was more extensive, more innovative, more influential, and more widely read than it had ever been in Eastern Europe. As the Yiddish cultural world debated where the center of Yiddish culture would be (Poland, Russia, and America were all contenders), Yiddish writers in New York were not so quietly claiming pride of place for themselves. One man dominated the literary and cultural scene, editing the largest-circulation Yiddish newspaper in the world. Abraham Cahan (1860-1951)—Ab. Cahan as he was known in Yiddish—was a socialist leader who edited the *Jewish Daily Forward* (the *Forverts*) for fifty years; only his death in 1951 ended what some described as his reign over Yiddish America. Cahan corresponded with almost every writer of Yiddish prose and poetry. He wrote Russian, English, and Yiddish under various pseudonyms. His English novel, *The Rise of David Levinsky*, continues to be heralded as a classic of American immigrant and ethnic literature. Another story, *Yekl*, became the acclaimed motion picture *Hester Street*. He was credited with—or blamed for—Americanizing Yiddish, seeking to make it more accessible to an increasingly assimilated audience and seeking to teach new immigrants the norms of an English sentence and New York life. In short, his significance to modern Yiddish culture and Jewish American culture cannot be overestimated.

So how did a part of Cahan's vast archive end up in Ann Arbor, Michigan? The University of Michigan's Judaica collection has grown steadily in the past two decades. When Judaic Studies and the University committed to filling a faculty position in Yiddish, that part of the collection began to grow as well, with particular attention devoted not only to the acquisition of books, but also of microfilms of newspapers and journals. Until recently, Yiddish scholars have spent much of their summers and vacations traveling to New York or Jerusalem to use Yiddish collections there. Students have sought research grants to do the same. But slowly we have been building a collection here that will significantly reduce the need for such trips. We have or are in the process of acquiring the full run of the major Yiddish newspapers in America—*Der forverts*, *Der tog*, *Morgn-zhurnal*, *Morgn frayhayt*—as well as other publications. The acquisition of microfilm copies of various archives offers a new opportunity for research. The

manuscripts and correspondence in Ab. Cahan's *Papers 1906-1952* are a major addition to this collection. Detroit was one of the Yiddish centers to which Ab. Cahan and his peers often traveled. Ann Arbor is now becoming one of the centers for Yiddish scholars and students of a new era.



Ab. Cahan, holding a copy of the *Forverts* from Av. Cahan bibliografye compiled by Ephim H. Jeshurin (New York, 1941). (Photo with permission of the Forward Association, Samuel Norich, President; and Estelle Brody, daughter of Ephim H. Jeshurin)



Professor Anita Norich and students in her Intermediate Yiddish class.

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Helping to Provide a Resource for Generations to Come: The Lucius N. Littauer Foundation

By Harriet Teller, Director of Development Communications and Events, University Library

The distance from Gloversville, New York, to Ann Arbor, Michigan is 567 miles, but the relationship between the two towns is much closer than the lines on the map might indicate. The roots of one of the major supporters of the Judaica Collections at the University Library, the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation, go back more than one hundred years to the small city situated in the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains.



Lucius Nathan Littauer (Images on this page courtesy of the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation)

The son of a Jewish immigrant from Breslau, Prussia, Lucius Nathan Littauer was born in Gloversville in 1859. After earning his degree from Harvard College in 1878, he went to work in his father's glove factory in his hometown. Under his direction, the family business became the largest manufacturer of its kind in the United States. Littauer served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1896 to 1907. He became a committed philanthropist, providing funds for many causes related to health, social welfare, and education. In

1925, he endowed the Nathan Littauer Chair of Judaic Studies at Harvard, the first of its kind in the nation. Four years later, the foundation that bears his name was established.

The Littauer Foundation was one of the major donors supporting the establishment of the Irving M. Hermelin

Curatorship of Judaica, the University Library's first endowed position, and has also provided significant funding to purchase books and other printed materials for the Library's Judaica Collections through the Littauer Judaic Studies Fund.

In addition to providing major support for the University Library, the Foundation has made grants over the past 20 years to support the research of UM faculty members including Anita Norich and Todd Endelman, who states, "Littauer is the strongest foundation supporting serious Jewish scholarship."

According to Pamela Ween Brumberg, Program Director of the Littauer Foundation, the support provided to the University of Michigan "is very much in keeping with the history of the Foundation and Mr. Littauer's giving. The Foundation has supported Jewish causes throughout its history and that became more focused on academic areas."

Ms. Brumberg adds, "As Judaic studies programs began to be established, it became obvious that it wasn't enough to support the courses, but you also need the books, which have become more and more expensive. We've established Judaica book endowments on college campuses and continue to support them. They provide lasting value. This is a resource for generations to come."

We are grateful for the many contributions by the Lucius N. Littauer Foundation to advance Judaic scholarship at the University of Michigan and are proud of the connection between Gloversville and Ann Arbor.



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