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Creating a National Bibliographic Past

The Institute for Hebrew Bibliography

ROGER S. KOHN

ABSTRACT

The mission of the Institute for Hebrew Bibliography (IHB), located at the Jewish and National University Library (JNUL) in Jerusalem from the early 1960s to the present, is to describe all of the books printed in Hebrew characters since the invention of printing to 1960. The ambitious scope of the project was set only after discussions between historians and catalogers. The IHB created two card catalogs, one for bibliographic descriptions, and a second for biographies of Hebrew authors. The release, in 1994, of *The Bibliography of the Hebrew Book* CD-ROM, followed in 2002 by an Internet-accessible database (updated in 2004), are benchmarks that allow the public to assess the work of the IHB. Technological advances can be used to deliver a clean and easily searchable database only when basic concepts of cataloging/database retrieval have been fully addressed.

THE ORIGINS OF THE PROJECT (1953–1959)

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 made feasible the project of a Jewish national bibliography, similar to the national bibliographies of Western Europe that were produced during the nineteenth century in Great Britain, Germany, and France. National bibliographies aim at unifying a territory and a language, recording all the books published within the borders of one nation. In the case of the Hebrew bibliography, the state, Israel, undertook a *retrospective* national bibliography, aiming at describing all Hebrew books issued since the invention of printing until 1960, *anywhere.* Achieving this ambitious goal was possible only because during the post-World War II decades publicly funded teams of researchers replaced the individual bibliographer, often toiling on a single work for decades (Malclès 1977).

The suggestion for a Jewish national bibliography came in 1953 from Dr. Israel Mehlmann (1900–1989) (Rubin 1993/1994; [Mifʻal] 1964, p. 7, 45). Between 1954 and 1959, Dr. Mehlman attempted to convince major Israeli aca-

demic institutions to support his project. In 1960, he co-authored with Abraham Meir Habermann (1901–1980) and Abraham Yaari (1899–1966) a *Plan for Comprehensive Bibliography of Printed Hebrew Books,* which described the scope of the planned bibliography (See [Mif'al] 1964, pp. 7–8, 45). The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Bialik Institute, the Rabbi Kook Institute, and the Ministry of Education and Culture of the State of Israel signed a joint agreement to sponsor a project aimed at preparing a complete register of printed Hebraica. "Thus came into being the Mif'al Habibliyografyah Ha-'Ivrit, officially translated as the Institute for Hebrew Bibliography" (Brisman 1977, p. 27).* In 1960, the Rabbi Kook Institute withdrew from the IHB.

THE INSTITUTE FOR HEBREW BIBLIOGRAPHY, 1960–1963

In April 1960, the IHB began its work on the premises of the Jewish National and University Library. The organization had an editorial staff, chaired by Professor Gershom Scholem (1897–1982); an editorial council, chaired by Professor Benzion Dinur (1884–1973); and an executive Committee with representatives of the sponsoring organization ([Mif'al] 1964, p. 8).

After a year of work, the executive editor of the IHB, Naphtali Ben-Menahem (1911–1974), reported on the Institute's activities in a presentation to the Third World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem in 1961 (Ben-Menahem, 1965). Ben-Menahem listed first all the individuals who had contributed previously to the field of Hebrew Bibliography, among them Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907), Joseph Zedner (1804–1871), Meijer M. Roest (1821–1889), and Samuel Wiener (1860–1929), all compilers of important catalogs of Hebraica collections. None of them compiled a comprehensive Hebrew bibliography. For Ben-Menahem and his generation, Jerusalem was the only place where there was a collective and cooperative bibliographic effort to create a comprehensive Hebrew bibliography.

Ben-Menahem referred to the guidelines established by the IHB editorial council in early 1960:

1) Including in the scope of our work all books printed in Hebrew language or in Hebrew characters, and a commitment to attempt to find every book, wherever it might be, without exception.
2) Compiling the bibliographical listing with book in hand, without the assistance of any existing list, however complete it might be.
3) Compiling a series of detailed indices, whereby every researcher and interested party would be able to access the historical and biographical resources available in the listing itself (Ben-Menahem 1965, p. 203).

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* Even though—as Shunami points out (1964, p. 303)—*Mif'al* better translates as "project," we will abbreviate it to "IHB" or "the Institute."

How many titles would be included in this scope? Ben-Menahem gave an estimate that varied from 80,000 (or fewer) to 150,000 titles. The earlier bibliographies of Benjacob (1880) and Friedberg (1928–1931) had 17,000 titles and 28,234 titles respectively. Brisman gives different figures: circa 15,000 and 26,000 for the first edition of *Bet ʿeked sefarim* and 50,000 titles for the second (Friedberg, 1928–1931 and 1951–1956). Ben-Menahem expected that the compilation would take eight to ten years, and the publication of the Hebrew bibliography another five years.

Around 1962, an undated brochure in English and in Hebrew described the project, repeating much of Ben-Menahem's 1961 presentation. It presented some "principles" established by the editorial staff, especially in the arrangement of the entries:

> The books will be entered alphabetically by authors' names. The name of each author, in Hebrew and Latin characters, will be followed by a few biographical details and at least one source from which they are drawn. Next will come the author's works, also arranged in alphabetical order. The reader will thus be able to find in one place a few details about the author, with a detailed list of all of his works and the various editions in which they were issued ([Mifʿal] 1962, p. [3]).

This may appear an obvious principle, but it was positively revolutionary in the field of Hebrew bibliography. Until now, the order was alphabetically by the *title* of the work, a tradition established by Steinschneider in his catalog describing the Hebraica holdings of the Bodleian Library in Oxford. Because the bibliographic record was established from a direct analysis of the title-page, it was important to list what would be copied. Therefore, the brochure stated, the entry would give the

> text of the title-page, with the omission of flowery phrases conveying no information about the book, . . . information on the contents of the book, the full name of the author, the name of his father or his forebears, his place of residence; the place where the book was printed and the name of the printer; and the year of printing as given on the title-page, with the addition in brackets of the appropriate Hebrew or civil year ([Mifʿal] 1962, p. [4]).

A clear principle was at work here. The cataloger was to record *grosso modo* what appeared on the title page. The description would continue with the collation, followed by a note listing additional works published together with the main work. A careful record of the letters of approbation (*haskamot*) contained in the book would give the "exact names of the signatories, the towns, where they were given and the dates." Incunabula, post-incunabula up to 1550, and "other valuable and especially important books" would be recorded in greater detail. A special section would be devoted to newspapers and periodicals. In general, broadsides would not be included in the work.

In 1963, the Institute issued a mimeographed volume (116 leaves), its first *Ḥoveret le-dugmah* (specimen brochure), with five main-entry samples from the letter *alef.* The 1963 volume was prepared by Naphtali Ben-Menahem and

the Institute's staff, mentioned for the first time. Four bibliographers (*ḥever ha-ʿovdim*), all men, are listed first: Barukh Mordekhai Cohen (deceased in 1991), co-editor of an annotated edition of the Talmudic dictionary, *Paḥad Yitsḥak,* by Rabbi Isaac Lampronti (1679–1756); Isaac Joseph Cohen (1923–1996), a specialist on Hungarian Jewry; Yehudah Aryeh Klausner, father of the Israeli novelist Amos Oz; and Israel Eliezer Pollack, who worked at the IHB until 1964.

A year later the Institute published a new version of the sample brochure, with a sixth main-entry sample (Ahad Ha'am) and additional entries added to the previous entries. This "refined and enlarged edition" (Brisman 1977, p. 28) included a long introduction by the Chair of the editorial board, Professor Gershom Scholem, as well as the rules of compilation. The 1964 *Specimen Brochure* expanded on all the previous publications of the IHB or of its Director. It is the most precise published source of information on the IHB. For example, it contains a detailed section on the "rules of compilation" addressing issues neglected in the undated brochure, such as the types of publications excluded from the scope, or the filing of anonymous works. For example: "Anonymous classics, such as the Bible, Talmud, Zohar, etc. are entered under the customary headings. Prayer books are entered under the specific rites" (p. 42).

Shlomo Shunami (1897–1984), reviewing the 1964 *Specimen Brochure,* heralded it as a "pioneer work" preparing the publication of a larger work "which will announce a new era in Hebrew bibliography" (Shunami 1964, p. 130). Although Shunami was a member of the editorial council of the Institute, he criticized sharply some aspects of the work of the IHB. In particular, he urged the editors not "to include in a bibliography to be used for generations the location of a book in a private collection, except in the rarest of cases" (p. 132). And indeed, the private libraries of Scholem and Ben-Menahem are listed as sources in the *Specimen Brochure* (pp. 19, 30, 34), together with public institutions in London and Jerusalem.

On the other hand, he welcomed the various steps taken toward a greater integration of Hebrew bibliography into the larger field of world bibliography. He praised the adoption of filing cards by authors' names and not by the title of works, and the creation of a parallel entry for their names in Latin characters. He expressed interest in knowing which scheme of transliteration into Hebrew was used, as this issue is "one of the most difficult and complicated questions in Hebrew bibliography" (p. 132). Finally, he remarked that the project undertaken by the Institute for Hebrew Bibliography had no name (suggested names were "Thesaurus of Jewish Books in Hebrew" or "Thesaurus of Hebrew books").

THE INSTITUTE, 1964–1991

Starting in 1964 it is possible to continue to follow the activities of the Institute from reports to the various World Congresses of the Jewish Studies, held every four years in Jerusalem.

At the Fourth Congress (1965), Gershom Scholem himself presented the report: A fully staffed Institute, working in earnest since 1962, had accumulated 35,000 cards in its card catalog, 10,000 being main entries. He recorded with sat-

isfaction the favorable reactions to the 1964 *Specimen Brochure,* acknowledging that it listed unseen materials, which was against the rules of the Institute—undoubtedly a response to Shunami's criticisms. Scholem also discussed specific issues of cataloging and classification: translations into Hebrew, cross-referencing, and classification within the card catalog. In all these instances, Scholem was hard pressed to find consistency in the decisions reached and had to note the fluidity of the Institute's working standards.

At the Fifth Congress, Ben-Menahem presented the update for 1969. The staff now comprised ten individuals, "some with much professional experience, rabbinic scholars, and experts in Hebrew literature in every dimension, as well individuals trained by the Institute." They had reached the letter *mem,* with such entries as *Maḥazor, Midrash,* and Maimonides, and the card catalog had doubled to 72,000 cards, with 37,500 main entries, 19,500 added entries and 7,200 cards of bibliographic references.

Ben-Menahem listed two major accomplishments of the Institute: the compilation of rabbinic approbations (*haskamot*) and the biographical research on authors. In both cases, Ben-Menahem gave many examples in order to justify the legitimacy of these aspects of the project. He tackled cataloging issues to a greater extent than Scholem did: should the Institute use the *scriptio plene* (*ketiv male*) or *scriptio defectiva* (*ketiv ḥaser*) for Hebrew? This question could be resolved only by the Va'ad ha-Lashon (Academy of the Hebrew Language), but practical choices needed to be made before a "linguistic ruling" was issued. The Institute adopted the *ketiv male,* while the resolutions on the spelling of Hebrew passed by the Va'ad ha-Lashon in 1948 had not yet been adopted (this happened in 1969, according to Eytan [1974]). This practice was unfortunate as it is at variance with most Israeli academic libraries, which adopted the *ketiv ḥaser,* a fact which is "confusing for the current user" (Hoffman 1995).

In 1971, the card catalog contained "almost eighty thousand cards, and the staff was still working in the Hebrew letter *mem*" (*Yedi'on* 1973). While preparing his *History and Guide to Judaic Bibliography,* Shimon Brisman recorded the following: "In September 1972, Mr. Ben-Menahem (1911–1974) informed this writer that the Mif'al had already completed the author registration up to the letter *samech* . . ." The untimely death of Ben-Menahem has "considerably altered this schedule of publication" (Brisman 1977, p. 275, note 126).

The death of Ben-Menahem (1974) did indeed alter the schedule of publication. After his death his collaborator, Barukh Mordekhai Cohen, directed the Institute until his own death (May 1991). The Institute experienced a lull in the productivity during the 1980s, as probably no more than 10,000 books were described in the course of that decade (Yudlov interview 1995).

IDEOLOGICAL UNDERCURRENTS

In evaluating the activities of the IHB under the first generation of directors, we should point to two key elements in the work of the Institute during the first two decades:

1) The Consequences of Early Israelo-Centrism

The prevalent ideology in the early 1960s was that Israel was the center of Jewish scholarship. In this view, the JNUL held all the Hebrew books in the world, and Jerusalem was the center for Hebrew bibliography (Scholem 1967, p. 459). By the late 1960s, Ben-Menahem made a timid push to implement a founding principle by saying that "we need now to start to work outside the walls of the JNUL" (Ben-Menahem, 1969, p. 56). In fact, Ben-Menahem himself toured Italy's finest libraries to establish bibliographic description of books not available in Israel. In the United States, two scholars worked for the Institute at the New York Public Library. In Great Britain, Rabbi Moshe Leib Weiser (owner of the Emel antiquarian bookstore in London) worked for the IHB at the British Library and, to a lesser extent, at the Bodleian Library (Yudlov interview 1995). The growing awareness of the relevance of collections in Europe and the United States greatly enhanced the legitimacy of the IHB bibliographic project.

2) Fluidity of the Cataloging Principles

The bibliographic project was carried out exclusively in Jerusalem, by bibliographers with little knowledge of cataloging issues elsewhere in the world. The cataloging rules for the Project were never firmly established. For example if a book had no date clearly established from the title page, the practice was at first to enter the notation [חש"ד] (*ḥaser shenat defus,* "date lacking"). This practice was discontinued at a later date, and an approximate date was provided, giving a century for the copy examined (Yudlov interview 1995). On an ideological level, the Institute suffered from a polarized leadership, the result of an ongoing misunderstanding between historians and librarians. The former group, alert to the historical potential of the Project, "envisaged broadening the scope of the Bibliography in various directions and the inclusion of all possible historical and bibliographical data on every book" ([Mif'al]1964, pp. 7–8, 45). The competing position, presented by S. Shunami on behalf of the JNUL, suggested restricting the scope of the Bibliography and deciding on basic principles and on cataloging rules that would ensure completion of the work within a set period of time.

It is clear that the historical camp, which established the original framework for the scope of the IHB, was unaware of its cataloging implications. Both camps were ideological Zionists and agreed on the larger isssue, the modernization of Hebrew bibliography. The actual intricacies of working a massive bibliography were not, however, clear to the Israeli historians. In the long run, though, the input of Shunami's group was required to maintain the consistency of the bibliography produced by the Institute. This restructuring of the Institute took time, and it was not fully completed until the early 1990s, when a trained bibliographer became director of the IHB. When we think that during the same period, the Anglo-American cataloging community moved from AACR1 to AACR2, these changes of Hebrew cataloging rules at the Institute are not surprising. The implications for an electronic database are also clear: without consistency in the data, no accurate sorting is possible. As long as the bibliographic records were *cards* arranged under the name of the author, bibliographers at

IHB did not see the need to do authority work between variant forms of an author's name or for titles.

THE INSTITUTE SINCE 1991

Since the summer of 1991, the Institute for Hebrew Bibliography has been directed by Isaac Yudlov. Rabbi Yudlov worked at the Institute for four years during the mid-1960s, and then at the Hebrew Cataloging Department of the JNUL, which he left to assume his current position. In 1994, Yudlov estimated that the Institute had accomplished seventy percent of its work and that the final bibliography would include 120,000 titles (Mustik 1994, Nagid 1994), 14,000 biographies of authors (in 1969 there were 7,200), as well as 40,000 rabbinic approbations (*haskamot*).

To the best of my knowledge, the next printed update on the activities of the Institute after 1971 is an undated, unpaginated announcement, distributed around October 1992. A new corporate author, "The Hebrew Bibliography Project," announced *The Bibliography of the Hebrew Book, 1473–1960,* still sponsored by the same three organizations listed since 1960. Obviously, Shunami's remarks on the name of the institution and its project had been heeded.

While Ben-Menahem estimated the number of titles to be between 80,000 and 150,000, in 1992 the figure of 90,000 was given. *The Bibliography of the Hebrew Book, 1473–1960,* "A Bibliography of all Printed Hebrew Language Books before 1960," had a new aim, stated by Prof. Israel Shatzman (director of the JNUL starting in October 1990), "to create a database of Hebrew books . . . , a continually updated and corrected process."

For this new goal of continually updating of the Hebrew bibliography two foreign partners were brought in, assuming all of the essential responsibilities of encoding the data in electronic format, and producing, marketing, and distributing a CD-ROM product: the publisher EPI, Ltd., and the distributor, Chadwyck-Healey, in partnership with an Israeli producer, C.D.I. Systems (1992), Ltd. All of the partners collaborated in creating the product, with income from allocated to C.D.I. Systems (1992), Ltd., for Israeli distribution only, and to EPI and Chadwyck-Healey for distribution outside of Israel.

Electronic Publishing International, or EPI, is owned by Donald Goldman, an American from New York City living in Paris (France). In 1985, he started Chadwyck-Healey France, and was a one-third share holder in that company until January 1993 (Goldman 1993). EPI, in Jerusalem, managed the production of the Hebrew Bibliography CD-ROM, and it was marketed outside of Israel by a subsidiary company, E.P.E. (L'Européenne de Publications Electroniques). According to a 1993 *News Letter* published by Goldman, distribution was done by Chadwyck-Healey and a smaller Israeli company, C.D.I. (Compact Disc International). In 2001, Goldman replaced these two companies with a single one, Goldman Publishing.

Goldman's Israeli partner, C.D.I. Systems (1992), Ltd., is owned by Moshe Shomer and Nir Ashkenazy, respectively son-in-law and son of the prominent

Israeli businessman Hillel Ashkenazy, and was created in 1987 to develop software to search compact disks. C.D.I. Systems (1992), Ltd., is a public company, traded on the Tel Aviv stock exchange (Lipkis 1992, Chasid 1995) and is a minority partner of EPI (Goldman 1993). Before producing the Hebrew Bibliography in CD-ROM, it produced other CD-ROM products, among them the Israeli General Encyclopedia in cooperation with Keter (Chait and Keren-David 1995). This latest item, based on the *Entsiḳlopedyah ha-ʻIvrit; kelalit, Yehudit, ve-Eretsyisreʼelit,* took "eight months of work" to produce, containing only the "the written material and not the graphics" of the *Entsiḳlopedyah* (Siegel-Itzkovich 1995; website, http://www.hebrew-bibliography.com/, accessed March 5, 2006).

Chadwyck-Healey Limited, founded in 1973 in Great Britain by Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey, became a pioneer in the government-related publishing industry, "taking government data and repackaging it and reselling it to libraries" (Stratford 1991, p. 134). But here it played only a minor role, withdrawing from EPI/EPE in June 1993.

A partnership including three sponsors and three commercial partners, on three continents, around one single CD-ROM was hard to coordinate. Goldman assumed the leadership of the team effort to market the Hebrew Bibliography on CD-ROM, relying on C.D.I. Systems (1992) Ltd. to manufacture the product. (That company is now taking a more active role in marketing the bibliography.)

The cards accumulated at the Institute for Hebrew Bibliography were filmed in 1992. After the filming, the entries were coded and the original cards were sent to the Philippines to be keyed in by people who did not know Hebrew (Nagid 1994). By outsourcing the keying of the Hebrew to a non-Hebrew speaking work force, the quality of the descriptive catalog accumulated on cards in Jerusalem was seriously compromised. A rekeying, this time in Poland, was necessary to get to a cleaner database.

On September 1, 1994, Isaac Yudlov gave a public presentation of the CD-ROM at the Hebrew University, an event that received coverage in the Israeli daily press. This release was in fact incomplete, lacking all of the descriptions of Bible and Talmud editions. Public debate concentrated first on the pricing issue. The marketing of the CD-ROM was clearly done with major academic institutions in mind, the very institutions that are able to afford the expensive library materials produced by leading publishers in the United States. At the same time, C.D.I. Systems (1992) Ltd. allowed Israeli rare book dealers to purchase their copy at a substantially reduced price (Goldman 1994b, Chasid 1995 [interviews]).

After the release of CD-ROM preliminary edition, several professional Judaica librarians related their experience of the product. All Hebraica librarians—both in Israel and the United States—agreed that the CD-ROM was a stupendous achievement, as a computerized catalog of Hebrew books in any form had been a desideratum for many years. Even if the CD-ROM was incomplete, the library community could use it because it displayed so much transcribed title information. For a librarian trying to identify a volume in hand, all these details allowed for proper identification of a book. Searching authors or titles was frustrating: "You have to know the exact spelling of each author's surname

to be able to retrieve it. However, knowing the first name and last name is not enough—you have to be accurate about ALL given names. A search under Gevaryahu, Hayim, resulted in zero hits. Only when we typed Gevaryahu, Hayim Moshe Yitshak [did we get] a positive result," noted Aviva Astrinsky (1994).

It was possible to switch to a browse mode, which partially addresses this problem, although there are no authority files for these two fields (author, title). This lacuna was especially frustrating when dealing with secondary author entries, i.e., when the "author" is an editor, commentator, or translator of a work. As Yudlov explained to Meir Bar-Ilan,

> The search result [on an author, in this case] Judah Rosenberg (1859–1935) is not complete [with the search of the author field]. The author field is intended to contain only the books where our main-entry card has Judah Rosenberg as the author. Books for which we considered that Rosenberg was a secondary entry, for example as a translator of the Zohar or as the editor of the compilation *Nifle'ot ha-Zohar,* it is not yet possible to find them under the spelling of the name we have accepted, but exactly as Rosenberg's name is spelled in the work itself. To find this name, one has to search the free-search field using the F4 key. This way you can find all the works Rosenberg is associated with in any fashion, including the books for which he wrote an approbation. (Yudlov 1994)

In other words, the work of converting the arrangement of principal and second cards as used in a manual card catalog, to the linking or indexing of data in the computerized world (online or on CD-ROM) was still to be done. Trained bibliographers at the IHB were expected to provide the crucial added value of editing the current version to link the added entries and create all the bibliographic tracings and cross references (Chasid 1995 [interview]).

In November 2002, Dr. Sara Fraenkel, then Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts at Bar-Ilan University, evaluated the work of the IHB in the eight years since the release of the 1994 CD-ROM. By then the bibliography included 85 percent of all books in Hebrew letters, not only in Hebrew but also in Ladino. There are now two versions available to access the Hebrew Bibliography, an updated CD-ROM and an Internet-accessible version (http://www.hebrew-bibliography.com, accessed March 5, 2006).

Fraenkel focused on the problems that continued to plague the Hebrew Bibliography in electronic format, first and foremost, the decision to use the *scriptio plene* (*ketiv male*) instead of the *scriptio defectiva* (*ketiv ḥaser*) prevalent in academic libraries' online catalogs and the rest of the country, compounded by the absence of a uniform title to gather all the editions of a work under one single title. The name of an author might require an *alef* (e.g., Liberman), titles may require additional *yud* like *tefilot* or *sidur.* Fraenkel encouraged the user to write these words with wildcards, even if it inflated the search with irrelevant results. Fraenkel then addressed what she called the absence of "statement of responsibility" to distinguish between many editions of a book,

> a leftover from the time of library cards . . . When the books were cat-
> aloged on cards, [catalogers] did not bother to record once more the
> statement coming after the title, which is usually copied from previ-
> ous editions. This flaw is grave in a computerized corpus for various
> reasons: a) people are looking for a specific edition, using parameters
> like printing place and/or date, and do not need former editions b)
> the statement is not always identical to that of a former edition, and
> sometimes minimal differences (in the abbreviation of words or in
> the titles given to people) help identify an edition. I am not sure that
> it is possible to remedy this situation, as it obliges the bibliographers
> to go back to the book itself.

The added entries for proper names found during the description of a book
have not been harmonized with a much needed name authority database,
Fraenkel wrote, "so that it is almost impossible to search, if you do not have
somebody with a very unusual name . . . A lot of work should be invested in
turning the names into uniform entries, and I do not know, if it is planned for
future editions."

As for the contents of the Hebrew Bibliography, Fraenkel noted that most
but not all complicated multi-volume sets in the letter *tav* were included, such
as *Tanakh* [Hebrew Bible] or Talmud, but entire editions of the Babylonian Tal-
mud were still not cataloged. Books with many editions, such as the *Mishnah
berurah* of R. Israel Meir ha-Kohen, the "the Ḥafets Ḥayim" (1838–1933)—which
she had tried to catalog in the 1980s—were not in the Hebrew Bibliography.
Because *Mishnah berurah* became an immediate bestseller, it underwent many
partial editions even before its publication in six volumes between 1884 and
1907. It was not cataloged by the IHB then and it is not now.

On the technical side, many improvements are required to make the
Hebrew Bibliography a user-friendly tool taking full advantage of the electronic
environment. Work is also continuing on creating uniform titles for all the per-
sonal or corporate names which are already indexed, some 55,000 names since
2004—but as of late 2006 some 30,000 names still needed indexing and authori-
ty work. Users familiar with the Google search engine or with searching in
ALEPH and similar academic library catalogs, have ever higher expectations of
the technology, as they use more and more sophisticated products. In this con-
text "it is not sufficient to simply deliver bibliographic information in yet anoth-
er format, users are looking for the 'value added' element which will increase
the effectiveness of their searches" (Taylor 1989, p. 46).

The IHB does not receive regular funding from the Hebrew University or
other Israeli governmental agencies. Instead, it has been funded year-to-year by
grants from private foundations. The staff currently (2006) working at IHB is
limited to Rabbi Yudlov and one full-time cataloger, plus fewer than half a
dozen part-time persons, most of them retired librarians (Yudlov 2005 [inter-
view]). Only a small fraction of the published Yiddish literature—fewer than
4,000 titles—has been described, most recently by Dr. Moshe Lemster. The work
on cataloging the various editions of the Talmud is progressing also slowly,
thanks to Dr. Sara Fraenkel's volunteer work. The work on cataloging other

Judeo-languages is a difficult proposition in the current fiscal situation, because many editions in Judeo-Persian, Judeo-Arabic, or in Ladino are not part of the collections of the JNUL and would involve expensive trips to European libraries.

We do not have yet *the* comprehensive Hebrew bibliography. As defined by Malclès, we have an excellent "primary, comprehensive, annotated, critical, retrospective" union catalog of the holdings of the JNUL and a few other libraries. Shunami's request to record the location of all books examined outside of the JNUL remains a desideratum, especially for the first 200 years of Hebrew printing (what is called in Hebrew "*reshin*" and "*shinin,*" i.e., books published between 1460–1640)— only 4,000 books, according to Vinograd's *Otsar* (1993, vol. 2, p. [24]).

Indeed, we will not ever have *the* comprehensive Hebrew bibliography: we know now that the work of the IHB will never be completed, as the database will keep on growing, with constant revision and addition. But the work in progress, thanks to the past and current employees of the IHB, is a tremendous accomplishment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

IHB   Institute for Hebrew Bibliography
JNUL   Jewish and National University Library

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