

Judaica
in the Slavic Realm,
Slavica
in the Judaic Realm



Repositories,
Collections,
Projects,
Publications

Zachary M. Baker

Editor

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(SLAVIC)

Judaica in the Slavic Realm, Slavica in the Judaic Realm: Repositories, Collections, Projects, Publications

Judaica in the Slavic Realm, Slavica in the Judaic Realm: Repositories, Collections, Projects, Publications has been co-published simultaneously as *Slavic & East European Information Resources*, Volume 4, Numbers 2/3 2003.

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REVIEWS,
COMMENTARIES,
EVALUATIONS . . .*



“A TREASURE TROVE of lucid, intelligent essays and annotated lists describing otherwise little-known or inaccessible information on collections long unavailable. I KNOW OF NO BETTER SOURCE IN ANY LANGUAGE. This is a first-rate volume that will prove indispensable to anyone interested in the history and culture of Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe.”

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Co-Director, Taube Center for Jewish Studies
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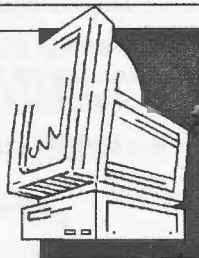
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- *CNPIEC Reference Guide: Chinese National Directory*
of Foreign Periodicals 2000
- *DARE Databank (covering social science periodicals)*
<<http://www.unesco.org/general/eng/infoserv/db/dare.html>> . . . 2001
- *IBZ International Bibliography of Periodical Literature*
<www.saur.de> 2000
- *Information Science Abstracts* <www.infotoday.com> 2000
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- *Könyvtári Figyelő (Library Review)* 2000
- *Management & Marketing Abstracts* 2000
- *OCLC Public Affairs Information Service*
<www.pais.org> 2000

(continued)

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Introduction

Judaica in the Slavic Realm, Slavica in the Judaic Realm presents a selection of articles on topics that, while certainly of relevance to Slavic studies, may be unfamiliar to many specialists in that field. This volume does not supply a comprehensive overview of developments in either of these two “realms.” The contributions appearing in these pages do, however, reveal the impressive scope and scale of publications relating to Jews and Judaism that are currently being published in Eastern Europe (especially the former Soviet Union). They also describe some of the important Judaica collections in that region, along with projects directed at identifying these resources and making them accessible. We hope that these discussions will contribute to the ongoing exchange of information between archivists, librarians, and academic specialists in both Slavic and Judaic studies, and that they will stimulate new and expanded initiatives in a broad area of scholarly inquiry and documentation that was blocked for decades.

Throughout the Cold War—i.e., during the aftermath of the Nazis’ attempt to exterminate all Jews who fell under their rule during World War II—public discussion of Jews and Judaism was virtually taboo within the Soviet Union proper, and permitted only under stringent controls in the rest of Eastern Europe. Local, regional, and geopolitics all played their parts in turning the “Jewish question” into one of the most conspicuous “blank spots” of an entire era. Until the second half of the 1980s, specialists in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were deprived of the most fundamental research tools—access to Judaica library and archival collections, and the opportunity to study the languages of Jewish scholarship: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish. Since then, they and their Western and Israeli counterparts have made an impressive start on

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filling in the blank spots, as a perusal of the articles contained in this volume reveals, but much work remains yet to be done.

We begin with Marek Web's description of a remarkable cooperative venture, Project Judaica's Jewish Archival Survey, which operates under the aegis of one Russian institution and two American research organizations. Since 1991, in addition to surveying Jewish collections in former Soviet repositories, Project Judaica has trained a new generation of young Russian researchers in the languages and methodologies of Judaic scholarship. Benyamin Lukin outlines the complementary efforts of the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (Jerusalem) to locate and copy archival sources on Russian Jewry.

It should come as no surprise that the great libraries of Russia—like those in Western Europe and the United States—possess extensive holdings of priceless Hebrew manuscripts and early Hebrew imprints. The noted bibliographer Shimon M. Iakerson draws his readers' attention to the outstanding collection of Hebrew incunabula held by the Asiatic Museum of St. Petersburg. This is followed by Benjamin Richler's discussion of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts' ongoing efforts to acquire microfilms of Hebrew manuscripts in Eastern European and former Soviet repositories.

From "repositories, collections, [and] projects," we move to "publications." Alexander Frenkel, the editor of the aptly titled Russian Jewish bibliographical journal *Narod Knigi v mire knig* (People of the Book in the World of Books), presents an overview of Jewish book publishing in the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic republics after 1990. Nikolai Borodulin's article on a decade of collecting activities by one particularly well-situated American repository, the library of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (New York), is a fitting companion piece to Frenkel's article. The proliferation of Jewish periodicals in Ukraine—the heartland of the Pale of Settlement (to which Jews in the Tsarist Empire were largely restricted until 1917)—is the subject of Vladimir Karasik's survey. Stephen D. Corrsin casts a westward glance, with his overview of bibliographical projects in Polish-Jewish studies. The volume concludes with Zachary M. Baker's discussion of attempts to document a specific aspect of the Eastern European Jewish heritage: its genealogical records.

Three extensive bibliographies grace this special issue, each one reflecting the rich and varied facets of the Slavic-Jewish encounter. These are:

1. Shimon M. Iakerson's listing of 38 Hebrew incunabula in the Asiatic Museum of St. Petersburg. These books' presence today in a St. Petersburg repository testifies to the legacy of two notable nineteenth-century Russian Jewish scholars and collectors.

2. Vladimir Karasik's checklist of 311 Jewish periodicals published in Ukraine from 1860 to the present. Their schematic breakdown into five different periods represents the bibliographer's reflections on the lives and fates of Jews in the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Ukraine.
3. Nikolai Borodulin's classified bibliography of several hundred Jewish books and periodicals (in a variety of languages) from the post-Soviet republics. One hopes that these publications are a harbinger of the gradual normalization of Jewish pursuits in the post-Soviet context.

Editing this volume has been a particularly gratifying experience. It is a great privilege to work together with distinguished colleagues in Russia, Israel, and the United States, whose impressive accomplishments speak for themselves.* In addition, reading through their manuscripts brings back memories of travels to formerly dormant repositories seeking to reconstitute themselves.

One such institution is the V. I. Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, in Kiev, which I visited in January 1992, just a few weeks after Ukraine formally achieved its independence. The insignia of Soviet power were still being removed from public buildings and the shadows of the interregnum were also perceptible in our tour of the Vernadsky Library's Jewish collections, which had only lately been moved out of remote storage for the first time since the 1940s. Meeting with the staff of the library's fledgling Judaica Section was one of the most moving experiences of my professional career.

Another story that remains to be told is the important role that commercial publishers such as IDC and Norman Ross have played in ferreting out, publishing, and disseminating previously unexplored bodies of Judaica in Eastern European libraries and archives. Appropriately, the final volume in Ross's series of reference works on Russian and Soviet bibliography is I. I. Gintsburg's *Jewish Manuscripts of the Institute of Oriental Studies, St. Petersburg* (2003). In his eloquent preface to the volume, Ross writes that the catalog "was compiled in the 1930s and 1940s by the famous bibliographer Iona Gintsburg, who starved to death during the siege of Leningrad." Ross takes note of the frequent business trips that he has made to the country that his great-grandparents left in 1897, and concludes: "I think, with these Russian-Jewish origins, that nothing

*I also wish to take this opportunity to thank Karen A. Rondstedt, Editor of *Slavic & East European Information Resources*, for the critical role that she has played toward seeing this volume through.

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could be more fitting than to publish this historic work as the final title in the series, compiled, as it was, by a Russian Jew about Russian Judaica. I hope the reader finds it useful."

It is in the same spirit that we offer these essays and bibliographies, which bring to light the rich documentary legacy and the continuing contributions of a people who for centuries populated the villages, cities, and towns of Central and Eastern Europe, and called these places home.

Zachary M. Baker
February 2003