

Summary of Meeting between Orly Simon and Representatives of the Vaad, 2 Jan 2014

Present: Orly Simon, head of Readers' Services

Dena Ordan, Nadia Zeldes for the Readers' Association

1. We discussed arrangements for the event honoring the retired Judaica librarians (the event was held on 26 Jan 2014).
2. Orly requested updated email addresses for sending announcements to readers (the update has been sent)
3. We received an update on hiring of new staff: the new Judaica librarian is Gaia Lembi; the new Israel librarian is Galia Richler (1/2 time position). Tsiona is now working as a guide. Alexis is the new director of the stacks.
4. We asked that the Building Committee set a meeting with our representatives (this has still not taken place).
5. The focus of the meeting was on problems in services in the reading rooms. The following points were raised:
 - a. The students in charge of book orders at the service desk are not acquainted with the collections, or the logic behind the shelf numbers. (This is particularly acute in the GRR where the collection has been rearranged according to the Library of Congress numbers). The rapid turnover and rotation of students among the reading rooms heightens the problem. We suggested that all the students receive basic grounding in the structure of the different collections.
 - b. The students also lack basic knowledge in the humanities or with the Aleph system. When there is a problem (such as a negative response from the stacks or

difficulty in ordering a volume from a series), they do not always know whom to approach to solve the problem.

c. The students also lack basic knowledge for solving technical problems, such as use of the library internet network to download articles (readers sometimes log on to other networks) or how to access interlibrary loan.

d. Shelf checks: we noted a decline in ongoing shelf checks—books are misplaced and series are out of order.

e. The need for an improved sense of service: the answer “I just give out books” is inappropriate; the students should aspire to solve problems.

f. The staff hired to man the service desk should reflect the readers’ expectations for basic knowledge and level of service. Orly suggested that the library would consider hiring paraprofessionals to man the service desk: B.A. students in the library sciences and IT.

Other topics:

1. Another central topic raised was the need to preserve the “readers’ community” which has been created and functions especially in the JRR. We suggested that a good way for the new Judaica librarians in particular and in all the reading rooms in general to get to know the readers, their interests, and spheres of knowledge would be to sit at the service desk part of the time (and not just at the reference desk). This would also allow them to build connections between readers and to create a base for consultations on developing and weeding the collections, book orders, and the like. The retirement of three professional, expert librarians at once left a huge gap.

2. Noise made by library staff while accessing the interior steps in the JRR.
3. Improvements to Merhav so that it will suggest alternatives in instances of a mistake or imprecise title in the search bar: the example of לוח לששת אלפים שנה.
4. We noted the existence of broken links to electronic resources in Merhav and the difficulty of directly accessing databases in general. Navigation on the website page for databases is cumbersome: for example, the crossover between Judaica and according to the alphabet does not work.
5. We noted the improvement to Merhav with the addition of “browse” in the search window.
6. Interlibrary loan: amount of time to receive orders from Mt Scopus need to be checked. If the policy assumption is that the Mt Scopus collection complements the NNL then the level of service needs improvement.