Summary of a meeting between the library administration and members of the board of the National Library Readers Association

11 Sept 2014

The administration was represented by: Oren Weinberg, Haggai Ben-Shammai, Orly Simon

The Readers Association was represented by: Nadia Zeldes, Dena Ordan, Benjamin Richler, Dan Bitan

The administration presented a rundown of important projects initiated by the library, with emphasis on digital projects

A. Digital projects

1. Hebrew manuscripts

--Uploading of Hebrew manuscripts and making them accessible on the internet. Cooperative agreements have been signed with several large libraries abroad that have holdings of Hebrew mss. At a later stage, the library may also try to reach out to holders of smaller collections.

--The library is working on developing a platform for reading and searching manuscripts. The site is intended for researchers but the library aspires to create interest in the broader public by presenting the stories behind interesting manuscripts.

--In the future, the Friedberg Geniza project (Cairo Geniza) may be part of this project.

2. Joint Israeli Archives Project

--The library is engaged in a pilot project that enables a uniform search in 9 archives, including Shittim, Trumpeldor, part of the Jabotinsky archives, Yad Yaari, Yad Tabenkin, and Yad Bialik. The IDF archives, Israel State Archives, and Yad Vashem are not part of this project.

3. Journey in Time

--The library has uploaded 150,000 posters and photos of ephemera from different places worldwide. There are cooperative agreements with 45 partners and institutions.

http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/digitallibrary/time_journey/Pages/default.aspx

4. Piyyut and Prayer Site

--The piyyut website will be absorbed into the library and the website is being developed in cooperation with Snunit.

5. A Home for Hebrew Song

--A dedicated donation has been received for uploading material from the Sound Archive to the internet, making it accessible and available to the general public.

6. The Center for Jewish Art

--200,000 objects from this collection have been uploaded to the internet and the catalog has been computerized:
http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/Hebrew/digitallibrary/cja/Pages/default.aspx

7. Visual Arts
--The project is related to material from theater, design, architecture, and applied arts.

8. Press
--The library hopes to add Jewish newspapers from Poland (from the Polish National Library)
--Access to the daily press in digital form in the library building: the project encompasses 70 newspapers plus preservation through digitization
--pre-1948 Palestine press has yet to be uploaded
http://web.nli.org.il/sites/JPress/Hebrew/Pages/default.aspx

9. Digital books
--The library is aware of and is attempting to address the problems with the use of digital books within the building. By the end of 2014 there were be access to some 6500 scanned books and 12,000 electronic books, most of them in Hebrew, including the books already digitized by the library. All of these books will be accessible online within the library building. The library is working toward uniform accessibility, the ability to search series, licensing agreements, and uniform formats. The provision of electronic books to the library by vendors is undergoing changes and there are limitations on their use.

B. New appointments in the library
--Aviad Stollman is now head of the Collections Department
--Haggai Ben-Shammai is the academic director of the library
--Yoel Finkelman has been appointed Judaica curator (instead of Aviad Stollman)
--Hadar Miller is in charge of technical services

C. The new building
--The target date for completion is 2019.
--The conceptual planning has been completed. The schematic plan will be made available to the readers. There is as yet, no detailed floor plan. Representatives of the Readers Association will be able to comment on the plans to members of the library administration who will convey them to the Building Committee.
--The library has received an additional donation from an American Jewish donor.

D. Wireless and public computers
--The wireless infrastructure was significantly enhanced during Sept 2014, enabling many devices to be connected simultaneously and surfing the internet at a good speed
--Public computers will be replaced during November 2014

E. Improvements in service from the stacks

--The number of "negative" answers from the stacks has been significantly reduced, by half. Also thousands of negative answers that have piled up over the past years have been treated.

--The stacks now function more efficiently. Most books arrive within 30 to 40 minutes from the time the order was placed. The inventory of books is proceeding, the catalog of journals has been computerized and will be part of the electronic ordering system.

F. Reduction in opening hours of the smaller reading rooms

--Because of the small number of readers taking advantage of the extended hours in some of the special collections, the hours in such collections, like Edelstein, will be reduced. The new hours will be announced.

G. Virtual store

--The library will open an online store for purchasing items, catalogs, tickets for events, and payment for library services (such as subscriptions and interlibrary loan)

Topics raised by the Readers Association representatives

1. Problems reading electronic books
2. Problems with the wireless
3. Making the plans for the new building available to readers
4. The closing of the library for 2 days in October, immediately preceding the opening of the academic year. We were apprised of the importance of the international forum and that the library was open for 2 days during Sukkot. The library aims to avoid closing the library to the public.
5. The dismantling of the reference books section
6. The collections in the reading rooms: the need for ongoing shelf checks. At present, some of the series (of biblical commentaries for example) are in disarray.
7. Noise from the patio next to the JRR
8. We requested that we receive updates as to the status of projects for which the library asked for reader input or responses, such as searching in Merhav, or another meeting of researchers with the Reference Department in order to address the special needs of researchers in the library
9. Noise made by the plastic bags: a suggestion was made to replace them with transparent hard plastic cases