



Working Paper: Topics of Concern to the Readers Association Board
Oct 2014

1. Reading rooms

- We find the absence of directors in the reading rooms surprising
- We are concerned about the division of the staff between different departments: the fact that the reference librarians belong to the reference department and the service desk to the circulation department leaves the Judaica reading room without a guiding hand and encourages neglect of maintenance tasks that ensure the effective functioning of the reading room.
- We request better training for the student staff. Staff members should be familiar with the reading rooms in which they work and the collections.
- We seek more effective administration of the Judaica Reading Room and the reading rooms in general. One sore point is the absence of regular shelf checks. The books, series especially, are not properly shelved. Another issue that arose is that the staff was unaware that books had been removed from the reading room (in this case by other library staff in order to replace the stickers).

2. Special collections: we view the special collections in the library, such as the Scholem Collection and the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts as essential to research and as strengthening the library's status as a lodestone for researchers from abroad. We request that these collections be developed and enhanced.

3. The collection in the General Reading Room: we view this collection (including basic works of sociology and anthropology, etc.) as essential to Judaica scholarship and ask that resources be directed to its development and broadening.

4. Library website: at present the search engine for databases is clumsy and we ask that steps be taken to see to its improvement. We remind the library that we have suggested the development of a "virtual reference shelf" along the lines of that available on the Library of Congress website.

5. Messages affecting readers on the library website: at present these are not prominently featured.





6. Cultural events in the library: we ask that the organizers of these events make every effort to preserve quiet and to avoid interfering with the functioning of the reading rooms.

7. Noise, dust, and use of dangerous chemicals: we request that the library supervise repairs and construction work carried out in the library more carefully in order to preserve the health of those in the building. Dangerous chemicals such as contact glue or turpentine should not be used during opening hours.

8. A major goal: without detracting from the library's role as a public institution, we request that the library remain faithful to its purpose as the leading research library in Israel. Emphasis should be placed on development of the academic sphere. Research should be encouraged within the library by granting fellowships and grants to scholars in the field of Judaica or to experts who will study the Hebrew manuscripts housed in the library.

9. Participation by readers in the plans for the new building is another major area of concern. We recommend that the plans be made available to entire reading public and that the public be afforded an opportunity to express its opinions on the design. We appreciate the opportunity to present our viewpoint to the library administration through two Association representatives.

10. Preservation of the traditions of the library: even in the midst of an accelerated process of change, we request the preservation of certain aspects that have come to be part of library tradition: one example is the "community of readers" that has developed in the JRR as a result of the activity of the librarians and reading room directors.

