



Summary of Meeting with Members of the Library Administration
21 December 2017

Present:

For the administration: Orly Simon, Tomer Hadad, Nachum Zitter

For the readers association: Dan Bitan, Dena Ordan, Benjamin Richler, Cana Werman, Nadia Zeldes

Many issues were raised at the meeting concerning both the present library building and the new building as were questions regarding the setting of library policy in several spheres.

I Reading Rooms: Books and Librarians

1. Choosing books for the reading rooms

Dan raised the question of who sets the policy that determines which books are on the shelf in the reading rooms. He argued that a library with reading rooms must have a governing policy; he noted that this question is relevant for the present and for the new library.

Nahum responded: that the library has both short-term and long-term policies.

a. Short term policy

- *Efforts are made to constantly refresh the collections
- *There are daily checks of what books are being used
- *Weeding of non-Hebrew journals (except for English) was undertaken. Journals that have been inactive for 30 years have been sent to the stacks after consideration of their importance to research.
- *There has been individual weeding of books
- *Older editions have been replaced by new editions
- *New subtopics have been created in the JRR (such as בטחון—תב)

b. Long-range policy

- *A decision was reached to devote a separate meeting to this topic

2. General Reading Room

During the meeting it became clear that there is at present no trained librarian or reference person in the GRR (which hampers decision-making for the reading room). The administration did not clarify the reasons for the absence of a librarian or reference expert in this reading room.

3. Training of Service Desk Workers

The members of the Readers Association board noted the need for more intensive training for the students at the service desks. Orly and Nachum



reported on efforts in that direction and on preparation of a manual that accompanies each worker from the moment he/she begins to work. Tomer commented that the service desk workers receive constant briefing, and professional guidance on the library collections. The administration admitted, however, that it is difficult for the workers to acquire such broad knowledge in a short time span.

II *The New Building*

1. *Representatives to the Planning Committee*

*Orly agreed that the Readers Association representatives, Dan Bitan and Susan Fraiman, will continue to be invited to meetings with Efrat (who heads the planning committee). Regarding the group of scholars (Simha Emmanuel, Elisheva Baumgarten, and Cana Werman) who were invited to advise the library on reading room design in the new building, we were informed that this committee has completed its task.

2. *Transportation*

*Dan raised the question of public transportation to the new building. It now appears that the light rail will not stop near the library. Dan wondered if the building's planners are aware of the problem and whether they are planning a parking lot that can accommodate readers' cars.

3. *Noisy Area*

*We raised the question of whether a "noisy area" to be situated near the reading rooms is part of the plans for the new library in addition to study rooms. The topic has been under consideration in the past; Orly said that in light of our comments, the topic will be raised again.

III *The Present Building*

1. *Eating in Public Spaces (outside the cafeteria)*

The problem of use of the Ardon Lobby and the couches on the entrance level as a place for eating meals and snacks was raised. The members of the board of the Readers Association argued that the consumption of food demeans the library in the eyes of visitors. They suggested that signs be posted forbidding eating and drinking in public areas with the exception of the cafeteria. It transpired that library policy does not forbid eating in the Ardon Lobby. However, Orly promised to check the matter and to explore possible solutions.

2. *Cleaning and Maintenance*

The question of the maintenance and cleanliness of the bathrooms was raised. Orly and Tomer responded that the library is obligated to use



the services provided by the contractor hired by the university. The Readers Association board members wondered whether it would be possible to change the terms of, or cancel, the contract if the contractor does not fulfill his side of the obligation, and to increase supervision. Orly promised to seek solutions.

Also raised was the level of cleanliness of the reading rooms, of dust on the tables and the floors.

3. *Insufficient Number of Washrooms*

The insufficient number of washrooms was raised in light of the administration initiative of bringing many groups to the library during the day and in the evening. At the very least we maintain that the library should upgrade the scope of cleaning during these hours of extra use. Orly replied that the administration is aware of the problem but that solutions are not readily available.

In our opinion, more can be done.

4. *Problems with Electricity*

a. Two rows in the GRR were disconnected for three days running. The staff did not report the problem, nor did they otherwise respond. The board members commented that response time should be faster. Orly rejected this claim, stating that most problems are reported and resolved in a timely manner. The board members differ.

b. The overhead lighting on the shelves in the first two rows of the JRR has not been working for about 6 months. Orly and Tomer promised to address this problem.

Lighting was installed in these rows in early March.

c. Dena inquired as to the failure to install the lighting projectors that had helped solve the problem of inadequate lighting in the JRR/ORR during the short winter days. The projector should have been installed in October, but had not yet been installed at the time of the meeting.

Orly promised to look into the matter.

The projectors were installed in January 2018.

d. In response to paragraphs a-c Cana noted that this is a built-in failure, that there is no one in the complex hierarchy of library employees responsible for overseeing what happens in the reading rooms. Orly forcefully rejected this claim, stating that 28 people are involved in serving the reading rooms and the readers. Orly and Tomer noted that each reading room has a coordinator responsible for services at the desk and other problems. It became clear that some of the Readers Association board members were not acquainted with the



coordinators. The names and contact details of the reading room coordinators are available on the library website.

5. *Copying Machines*

The Readers Association board members felt that the service was not professional. Orly and Tomer reported that the library would be receiving new equipment. Dan suggested that the contract with the service provider stipulate fast, professional service.

6. The board members noted general problems of maintenance and cleanliness and the absence of a single address for problems that arise. Orly and Tomer directed us to the reading room coordinators, and to themselves.

IV *Music Reading Room*

Once again we raised the problem of inappropriate use of the Music Reading Room by yeshiva students. The screening of pornographic films and overcrowding make it difficult for researchers to work there.

Orly reported that efforts are being made to supervise use of the computers. Nachum reported that, in the catalogue room, the turning off of the sound on some of the computers reduced overcrowding. Also reported was the involvement of the head of security in the building, Shmuel Guy, who tracks use of the computer monitors. Both Nachum and Orly agreed that the staff in the Music Reading Room should be instructed to take a more hardline policy toward inappropriate use of the monitors. A suggestion was made that the library issue cards to users (as in the NYPL) which would enable the library to keep track of who uses its services, and perhaps pre-ordering of time slots for use of computer monitors.

V *Events and Education Section Activity*

*The board of the Readers Association noted that the administration does not always adhere to its promise to give readers advance notice of events whose preparation will create more noise than usual

* Dan suggested locking the piano so that the groups of children flooding the building will not be able to play it (he reported that Yonatan ha-Katan is the most popular piece).

* The board commented that the education section brings many groups of children to the library but fails to set behavioral guidelines. It appears that the education section staff is unaware that the library is not just a national community center but also has reading rooms and readers. A suggestion was made that guidelines be drawn up and transmitted to teachers and those accompanying groups before their arrival at the library. It was also suggested that an additional library staff member accompany each group.



- * Cana commented (again) on the embarrassingly unesthetic appearance of the stage in the Ardon lobby.
- * The board members also commented on the burdensome nature of the visits by twelfth-graders to the library in order to compile material for their papers. The pupils are not aware of proper behavior in the library. The pupils come in large groups and often more than one person requires the same books. Their visits include conversations among themselves and also with the librarians.
- * Lectures on You Tube: we suggested that every event should be filmed and uploaded to the library website. The board members were unaware that the library has YouTube and that much content is available there.
- * Orly will check on the possibility of arranging a meeting with the head of the education and culture section of the library in order to discuss these issues.

VI The Library Website

The board members noted the need for ongoing publication of the databases available to readers and online guides to their use. Dena noted that one model is the Virtual Reference Shelf of the Library of Congress website that provides two levels of links to informative websites: one general; the other specialized.

Nachum reported that this year, after a three-year break (2014-17) that the list of websites has been updated. He also spoke of the problems that are part of subscriptions to digital websites and journals, which are ordered through agents; this causes constant shifts in the list of websites and journals included in the subscription but the agent does not necessarily inform the library of changes.

VII The Library Budget

We inquired as to whether there is public access to information on the library budget and its distribution. Orly promised to take the matter up with the director of the library, Mr. Oren Weinberg.

VIII Study Rooms

We again raised the question of whether electronic ordering can be instituted in order to ensure more equitable use of the rooms. Solutions are being explored.