

Linking for Learning



Task Force on Technology

JESNA: Jewish Education Service of North America

Jeffrey Rothenberg, Chair
Caren N. Levine, Staff

April 1998

JESNA: Jewish Education Service of North America
730 Broadway • New York, NY 10003
(212) 529-2000 • www.jesna.org

Linking for Learning



Task Force on Technology

JESNA: Jewish Education Service of North America

Jeffrey Rothenberg, Chair

Caren N. Levine, Staff

April 1998

Additional copies may be obtained by contacting:

JESNA: Jewish Education Service of North America

Publications Department

730 Broadway • New York, NY 10003

Phone: (212) 529-2000

Fax: (212) 529-2009

Web: <http://www.jesna.org>

Email: info@jesna.org



Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Linking For Learning: Media and Technology in Jewish Education 2

Options Paper: Shaping the 58th Century with 21st Century Technology 12

Telecommunications and World Jewish Renewal 17

Members of the JESNA Task Force on Technology 30

Introduction

JESNA, the Jewish Education Service of North America, was created in 1981 as the Jewish Federation system's educational coordinating, planning and development agency. JESNA works to promote excellence in Jewish education by:

- initiating and facilitating the exchange of ideas, programs, and strategies for strengthening Jewish education among communities and institutions;
- providing expert guidance on program design and evaluation, innovative educational resources, policy and planning to assist local education efforts; and
- building coalitions with partners in North America and Israel to develop and implement high quality educational programs and to promote broad scale organizational and communal change

JESNA is widely recognized for its leadership in the areas of research and program evaluation, professional recruitment and development, media and technology, organizational change, effective program design and dissemination.

The Operational Priorities Committee of the JESNA Board of Directors recommended the establishment of a Task Force on media and technology in Jewish education in Spring 1996 to guide JESNA's role in this area. The Task Force would investigate the nature of educational technology in Jewish education and explore appropriate roles for the agency to undertake in this area. Specifically, the goals of the Task Force were to:

- identify needs and opportunities for expanding the effective use of media and technology to enhance Jewish education and lifelong Jewish learning
- define a strategy for JESNA to strengthen its advocacy role and contributions to the development of media and technology for Jewish education and lifelong Jewish learning
- make specific recommendations regarding new initiatives which JESNA should undertake in keeping with the overall strategic direction defined for the agency

We are pleased to submit the final report and recommendations of the Task Force. The final report and recommendations reflect arenas for further development by JESNA in partnership with key stakeholders in educational technology. Included in this report are documents which will provide background to the work of the Task Force as it proceeded from the June 1997 conference organized by JESNA, *Shaping the 58th Century With 21st Century Technology*. The *Options Paper* represents ideas that evolved out of Task Force meetings. Eli Evan's keynote address, *Telecommunications and World Jewish Renewal*, which was presented at the June conference, provides a context from which to better understand the current landscape of technology for Jewish education.

And finally, we wish to gratefully acknowledge the outstanding work of the Task Force members and thank them for their enthusiasm, hard work, and collegueship. Additional thanks are offered to the many resource people who provided valuable insights and guidance along the way.

Jeff Rothenberg, Chair, JESNA Task Force on Technology Caren N. Levine, Director, Media and Technology

Linking For Learning: Media and Technology in Jewish Education

[The telecommunications revolution] is a key to Jewish renewal because it is a way into the home and into the heads and hearts of young people, of children, and of families. It can renew our schools, empower our teachers, and allow our best institutions and most inspiring teachers into our homes and the lives of our children and grandchildren. The technological revolution does not replace the gifted teacher — but it does represent an extraordinary resource for the teacher. It offers new ways to interact with a broader world, opening doors to exciting new visual, textual, and intellectual discoveries and engaging students with Jewish history. It is our generation's challenge for the next century. — Eli Evans



The new communications technologies — computers, CD-ROM and DVD, the Internet, video, satellite and cable — will not by themselves ensure that Jewish education is transformed in the coming years... but without using these technologies... this transformation cannot be achieved

Opportunity and Challenge

The task of transmitting the Jewish heritage and inspiring Jewish commitment in successive generations of Jews has become more complex and challenging. The Jewish community is responding to this challenge by transforming the ways in which it thinks about and delivers Jewish education. A new vision is emerging of Jewish education as a lifelong endeavor which takes place in day and supplementary schools, in synagogues and Jewish community centers, on college campuses and in summer camps, in Israel and in organizational board rooms, around the dining room table and in front of computer screens.

This is a powerful, promising vision of Jewish educational renewal. But to fulfil its promise, we will need to expand vastly the resources available to those who are engaged in shaping and implementing the programs and lessons that bring Torah and the Jewish heritage alive. To create educational experiences of the highest quality, educators and lay leaders need efficient, almost instantaneous access to a vast array of ideas and tools that can stimulate and channel their creative energies. They need to be able to communicate with one another, to form a reflective, mutually supportive community of learners and teachers. The new communications technologies — computers, CD-ROM and DVD, the Internet, video, satellite and cable — will not by themselves ensure that Jewish education is transformed in the coming years in order to realize this vision, but it is virtually certain that without using these technologies in bold and effective ways this transformation cannot be achieved.

Setting the Stage for a New Role: JESNA's Involvement with Media and Technology

JESNA's commitment to harnessing the power of media and technology to enhance Jewish learning and teaching is not new. A decade ago, JESNA established the Jewish Media Resource Network, tying together local Jewish

media centers around the continent. In 1992, JESNA issued the *Report on the Survey of Jewish Community Media-Resource Centers in North America* in cooperation with the Network. The report identified diverse approaches taken by communities in providing media-resource service delivery. For several years, the Network's publication, *Media Meida*, served as a widely-circulated vehicle for sharing information about new developments and products in the field that could help educators in and beyond the classroom.

With the rapid expansion of the Internet, JESNA moved quickly to use this technology to disseminate knowledge and resources and to connect those involved in Jewish education on a scale far greater than ever before. *JEWEL: JEWish Electronic Learning*, is JESNA's interactive resource, providing educators, planners, and lay leaders with access to our extensive website (www.jesna.org) and to over a dozen dedicated online discussion forums. JESNA's fully searchable website contains sections devoted to publications, research, special education, noteworthy projects, and Jewish continuity and education program banks, in addition to annotated links to hundreds of other educational resources and sites. *JEWEL* also provides guidance to help local communities train their educators and lay leaders to take maximum advantage of the Internet in their work.

Recently, Caren Levine, JESNA's Director of Media and Technology, conducted site visits and met with educators in schools and central agencies in: Atlanta, Baltimore, Kansas City, Los Angeles, and New Jersey. Ms. Levine has also met with several foundations to explore their needs and concerns in this area, including the Covenant Foundation, the Righteous Persons Foundation, and the Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation.

In June 1997, JESNA helped to organize a landmark conference, "Shaping the 58th Century with 21st Century Technology" at Brandeis on behalf of the Morton J. And Louise D. Macks Family Foundation, the Charles H. Revson Foundation, the Covenant Foundation, and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis. The conference brought together developers, funders, and users of Jewish media and technology for the first time. Participants analyzed the current state-of-the-art in Jewish media and technology, and identified the challenges that must be met to transcend present achievements.

Immediately following the conference, a small, representative advisory group met to discuss possible next steps and the roles which JESNA might take to carry forward this exciting beginning. This group urged that JESNA's Task Force on Technology identify what would be needed to bring media and communications technology (including Jewish television, video, software, and multimedia material, as well as the Internet and the World Wide Web) into the mainstream of Jewish educational practice, and, more specifically, to recommend ways in which JESNA

JESNA's Task Force on Technology identified what would be needed to bring media and communications technology into the mainstream of Jewish educational practice, and, more specifically, recommended ways in which JESNA could help to meet some of these needs



could help to meet some of these needs.

The Task Force's Work

The Task Force held four meetings over a period of several months in the Fall and Winter of 1997-98. Task Force members include representatives from the JESNA board, foundations, schools, central agencies for Jewish education, and other educational institutions (including some in general education). In order to determine how best to locate JESNA's work within a rapidly growing and changing field, the Task Force consulted with lay leaders, educators (including teachers, principals, central agency staff, and academics involved in Jewish educator training), developers of computer and media resources and projects, and foundation staff to identify issues of concern to the educational community. Prominent figures from Israel as well as North America were consulted.



The potential of current technologies to expand access to and enhance the quality and impact of Jewish learning experiences is substantial

The Task Force pursued the following questions:

- How can we encourage greater development and use of the resources and opportunities afforded by new technologies to enhance Jewish learning and living in various settings?
- What are the most significant ways in which technology can be used to enrich our work as Jewish educational professionals and lay leaders?
- How can we effect cultural change in the educational community in order to foster opportunities for creative risk taking and innovation, and to support educators as they learn to integrate technology into their work?
- How can JESNA's specific capabilities and position in the educational and communal worlds be most effectively brought to bear on these issues? What new initiatives and projects should the agency undertake?
- What will JESNA need in the way of new resources in order to carry out these initiatives effectively?

What follows is a summary of the Task Force's findings and recommendations with respect to these questions.

Findings

- The potential of current technologies to expand access to and enhance the quality and impact of Jewish learning experiences is substantial.

- Appropriately utilized and supported, technology can strengthen the education that takes place within and through institutions *and* reach individuals in settings (such as the home) outside traditional institutional frameworks.
- This potential is likely to grow almost exponentially.
- There are many promising initiatives evolving in this area, embracing a wide range of specific technologies.
- The Jewish community is beginning to take steps toward creating an environment in which educators and institutional leaders can make informed decisions about how to use educational technology to enhance their work and that of their institutions.
- There is, however, a serious lack of coordinated effort among key stakeholders in educational technology. Front-line educators, program and product developers, experts on the introduction and use of technology, funders, and lay leaders do not communicate regularly or act in concert to move initiatives forward. Often, they are unaware of each other's needs, activities, interests, and concerns.
- As a result, current efforts to utilize technology more extensively and effectively are hampered by many "systemic" deficiencies. These dysfunctions — poor access to information; scarcity of resources for innovation; too many small projects never brought to scale; lack of standards and procedures for evaluation; and inadequate training, among others — are not untypical of North American Jewish education as a whole. However, they are even more injurious in this instance, given the newness and complexity of technology.

The Jewish community is beginning to take steps toward creating an environment in which educators and institutional leaders can make informed decisions about how to use educational technology to enhance their work and that of their institutions



The Task Force identified six specific arenas for action in order to realize the potential of technology for Jewish education and to address current areas of weakness:

- Professional Development
- Educational Resource Development
- Financial Resource Development
- Research and Evaluation
- Advocacy
- Marketing and Dissemination

Professional Development

There is a need to establish quality professional development to help educators learn how to integrate media and technology into their work. We need to create safe environments in which educators can take risks and play with ideas, issues, hardware and software. We must also provide educators with tools that will empower them to create their own material. Professional development must be structured in ways that allow for ongoing collegial support.

Educational Resource Development



We need to create safe environments in which educators can take risks and play with ideas, issues, hardware and software

Many quality educational resources have already been developed and implemented in educational settings, and new ones are appearing almost daily. These can and should be shared with other communities and institutions. At the same time, new resources for learning and teaching are also necessary, including educational programs and curricula that fully integrate technology as a medium for both content and educational process. We have barely begun to scratch the surface of what can be done educationally with the tools now and soon to be available to us: DVD, high-speed Internet connections, interactive videoconferencing, etc. We need to learn how to marry high quality content with state-of-the-art constructivist learning methodologies, as some of the best resources and projects in general education are now doing.

Financial Resource Development

Educators and developers are often stymied by the capital intensive nature of some technologies. There is a need to secure financial resources for a wide range of projects, both those which may be commercially viable, as well as more risky research and development innovations. Financial resources are also required to equip institutions appropriately and to provide professional development.

Research and Evaluation

We do not adequately understand the challenges of integrating media and technology into Jewish educational settings and practice. We lack a detailed road map to tell us where the greatest areas of need are, where to turn to find examples of success, and what routes to take to speed the process of bringing "best practice" on line. We need to develop systematic approaches to monitor what is happening in the field, to assess progress, and to explore promising new directions. Additionally, we have no statistics today regarding use of technology for Jewish education. There is a widespread perception that Jewish education has lagged behind the general field in taking advantage of electronic communications technologies. This is ironic for several reasons: first, because there is good

reason to believe that Jews have access to and use these technologies at a very high rate in other spheres of their lives; and second, because in a field which suffers from many systemic deficiencies (lack of adequate vehicles for teacher preparation and supervision, poor communication between and among institutions and practitioners, etc.), technology is a promising tool both for enriching what actually goes on in the classroom and for providing additional support and assistance to front-line educators as they seek to excel in their work.

Advocacy

There is a need to create informed advocacy for the field of Jewish educational technology among lay leadership and professionals. Without consistent and knowledgeable advocacy, it is unlikely that we will be able to marshal the resources necessary not only to develop high quality materials, but to overcome the inevitable barriers and inertia that inhibit their widespread utilization.

Without consistent and knowledgeable advocacy, it is unlikely that we will be able to marshal the resources necessary not only to develop high quality materials, but to overcome the inevitable barriers and inertia that inhibit their widespread utilization

Marketing and Dissemination

There is a need to facilitate the marketing and dissemination of quality resources and innovative projects to the broad community. Producers find it difficult to break into the Jewish educational market and to garner the attention, sales, and utilization which justify (and support) subsequent projects and which inspire others to enter the field. Locally created materials need to be available in other communities. End-users need simplified access to the information about what is available, and, where feasible, reliable guidance as to its quality and suitability for particular purposes.



The Role of JESNA

The Task Force also found that JESNA is well-positioned to play a more active role in helping to meet these needs. JESNA has a long history of involvement in the field and has professional staff with the necessary expertise. The agency enjoys the respect of and close relationships with many of the key figures now developing new technology initiatives and products in North America and in Israel, and is directly linked to the local Jewish educational and communal systems through central agencies and federations. In addition, the agency is perceived as a skillful arbiter and an honest broker with whom other organizations enjoy fruitful partnerships. JESNA also benefits from its association with the Covenant Foundation, which provides financial support for a number of innovative technology projects.

Recommendations



The Task Force recommends that JESNA expand its work in the area of media and technology to encompass several additional or enhanced roles

In light of the above findings, and especially the needs identified in the six areas delineated by the Task Force, the Task Force recommends that JESNA expand its work in the area of media and technology to encompass several additional or enhanced roles. The Task Force believes that the expanded activities that they envision for JESNA are fully in keeping with the overall thrust of JESNA's current work in seeking to mobilize the community for excellence in Jewish education and take good advantage of the agency's core competencies and relationships.

At the same time, the Task Force is mindful of the fact that additional financial resources will be needed in order for JESNA to implement these recommendations. JESNA will need to bring on additional staff and to enhance its own technical capabilities.

The Task Force recommends that JESNA increase its activity in eight areas:

1. Advocacy
2. Disseminating and Sharing Information
3. Training and Development
4. Convening Key Stakeholders
5. Work With Communities
6. Supporting and Modeling "Cutting-Edge" Projects
7. Promoting Collaborative Projects and Funding Coalitions
8. Research and Evaluation

Specific, illustrative recommendations in each of these areas follow. It should be noted that these do not exhaust the potential actions within each area, and that continuing work will be necessary to refine these recommendations for implementation and to identify additional specific steps that may be appropriate. For this reason, the Task Force also recommends that JESNA establish a committee or other implementing body to oversee JESNA's ongoing work in the area of media and technology. This committee should continue to work with an advisory group drawn from the field.

- *Developing Advocacy*
 - ▶ develop a "vision paper" on technology that captures the communal imagination and illustrates how technology can enhance Jewish education in specific contexts and settings
 - ▶ create "boiler plate" needs statements and furnish background information that developers can use in approaching potential funders
 - ▶ develop and distribute "faqs" (responses to frequently asked questions) to

- ▶ assist community decision makers and planners
- ▶ articulate standards for the community — what should every school be doing in this area? What resources should be available in every Jewish home? What should every teacher know about technology? What should every lay leader know?
- ▶ use technology to provide tools for lay leadership to better advocate for Jewish education in general and media and technology in particular (e.g., create online learning modules, facilitate electronic dialogues, etc.)

[JESNA should] use technology to provide tools for lay leadership to better advocate for Jewish education in general and media and technology in particular

- *Disseminating and Sharing Information*

- ▶ establish a “clearinghouse” that maintains updated, annotated listings of materials and resources available for various settings, age groups, etc.
- ▶ compile resource guides in multiple formats of what exists and how to use it, on specific topics and themes (e.g., holidays, prayer, Jewish history, etc.)
- ▶ create forums for interaction among educators through newsletters, conference calls, electronic discussion lists, and the JESNA website



- *Training and Development*

- ▶ develop “virtual communities of practice” using technology to enable principals, teachers, adult educators, youth workers, etc. to learn from one another and to support professional growth
- ▶ create online venues for professionals and lay leadership to learn from each other and work together
- ▶ coordinate workshops at national and regional conferences to increase institutional and educator comfort levels with technology
- ▶ provide on-site or “distance learning” training sessions to help local educators learn how to integrate technology into their work

- *Convening Stakeholders*

- ▶ coordinate an annual or biennial conference similar to the one held in June 1997
- ▶ convene special conferences and consultations to explore specific issues, e.g., how to utilize the rich storehouse of survivor testimonies about the Holocaust available to educators

- *Work with Communities*

- ▶ help communities develop comprehensive “technology plans” that involve the full range of local institutions, professionals, and lay leaders



[JESNA should] work directly to assist selected communities and institutions seeking to expand their use of technology in order to demonstrate the potential benefits of such use and to learn further about the challenges involved and the strategies needed to maximize success

- ▶ “trouble-shoot” for communities having difficulty in introducing technology
- *Supporting and Modeling “Cutting-Edge” Projects*
 - ▶ build a database of best and promising practices
 - ▶ partner with local agencies and/or producers of materials and resources to develop community-based demonstration projects that seek to model new ways of using technology
 - ▶ monitor and (where appropriate) assist Covenant Foundation supported projects that are introducing innovative approaches to using technology
- *Promoting Collaborative Projects and Funding Coalitions*
 - ▶ create consortia of local agencies with complementary expertise to work together on media and technology projects
 - ▶ help potential funders and projects to identify and communicate with one another (e.g., by preparing dockets on interesting projects seeking financial support and circulating these to foundations)
 - ▶ foster partnerships between local communities and national and international organizations active in developing technology projects and resources (e.g., HUC, JAFI, JTS, ORT)
- *Research and Evaluation*
 - ▶ conduct research and evaluation consonant with models of best and promising practices
 - ▶ facilitate community scans of how educational technology is incorporated into the work of Jewish education in various settings
 - ▶ collect baseline data regarding the use of educational technology in Jewish education

Next Steps

As concrete next steps, the Task Force recommends that JESNA:

1. Set up an implementation committee and establish an advisory board composed of representative stakeholders
2. Prepare a specific plan for expanding its role as a clearinghouse for information about media / technology initiatives and resources
3. Work directly to assist selected communities and institutions seeking to expand their use of technology in order to demonstrate the potential benefits of

such use and to learn further about the challenges involved and the strategies needed to maximize success

4. Organize a follow-up conference to the one held in June 1997

Conclusion

The JESNA Task Force on Technology has explored the field from two overall frameworks. One framework conceives technology as a means of enhancing the work in which Jewish educators are already engaged. The other suggests that there is something truly revolutionary and compelling about today's information technologies which allows us to redefine the very nature of that work. It is clear that the Jewish community must be made aware of the complexities of theories and practice related to the field, and must have venues for experimentation and reflection.

Technology is not an end in itself. But neither is it merely another means for conveying information just as easily transmitted through other media. Like printing half a millennium ago, today's electronic communications technology transforms the relationships between content and student, teacher and learner, classroom and livingroom. It can break down the barriers of time and space that prevent many from experiencing first-hand the wisdom of Jewish tradition and the joys of Jewish study. It can make Jewish education truly a universal enterprise.

The promise of technology for Jewish education is real. It is our challenge as a community and as an agency committed to excellence in Jewish education to seize the opportunity and to bring this promise to fruition, for the sake of the Judaism we love and the future we seek.

Technology is not an end in itself. But neither is it merely another means for conveying information just as easily transmitted through other media



Options Paper **“Shaping the 58th Century with 21st Century Technology: Developing the Field of Media and Technology for Jewish Education”**

JESNA Task Force on Technology

Background



...although there are many promising initiatives evolving in this area, there is a lack of coordinated development among key stakeholders in educational technology

The Jewish community is beginning to take steps toward creating an environment in which educators and decision makers can make informed decisions regarding educational technology. It has become clear that, although there are many promising initiatives evolving in this area, there is a lack of coordinated development among key stakeholders in educational technology.

JESNA organized a landmark conference in June 1997, “Shaping the 58th Century with 21st Century Technology” at Brandeis on behalf of the Morton J. And Louise D. Macks Family Foundation, the Charles H. Revson Foundation, the Covenant Foundation, and the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies.

The conference brought together developers, funders, and users of Jewish media and technology for the first time. Participants helped to identify state-of-the-art in Jewish media and technology, and challenges in the field. Immediately following the conference, a small, representative advisory group met to discuss possible next steps and roles which JESNA might assume.

It became apparent that JESNA’s Task Force on Technology could play a pivotal role in helping to identify needs in the area of media and technology (including Jewish television, video, software, and multimedia material, as well as the Internet and the World Wide Web) and, more specifically, examine ways in which JESNA could help to meet some of these needs.

The Task Force, which includes representatives from the JESNA board, foundations, schools, central agencies for Jewish education, and other educational institutions is, therefore, investigating how to locate JESNA’s work within the field of Jewish educational technology.

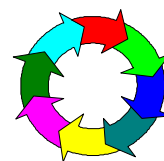
As part of its work, the Task Force has begun to identify issues of concern to the educational community through meetings and consultations with lay leaders, educators, developers, and foundations.

Needs and Possible Options

The Task Force developed this Options Paper based on the June post-conference follow up meeting, meetings of the Task Force, a consultation at the General Assembly, and individual conversations with key informants. This paper represents an attempt to categorize perceived needs in the field based on this data and possible means of addressing them. The Task Force will review these suggestions and begin to create a blue-print for JESNA's work in the field.

The Task Force pursued the following questions: How can technology be used to enrich our educational work as Jewish professionals and lay leaders? How do we effect cultural change in the educational community that provides opportunities for creative risk taking and innovation, and supports educators as they learn to integrate technology into their work? How do we encourage greater development and use of the resources and opportunities afforded by new technologies to enhance Jewish learning and living in various settings?

How do we encourage greater development and use of the resources and opportunities afforded by new technologies to enhance Jewish learning and living in various settings?



The Task Force identified six areas of need in the development of quality educational technology for lifelong Jewish learning:

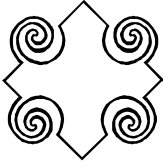
- Professional Development
- Educational Resource Development
- Financial Resource Development
- Research and Evaluation
- Advocacy
- Marketing and Dissemination

Professional Development

There is a need to establish quality professional development for learning how to integrate media and technology into Jewish education. We must also provide educators with tools that will empower them to create their own material. We need to create safe environments for educators to take risks and play with ideas, issues and resources, with the benefit of collegial support.

Options

- Consult with communities and schools on providing professional development
- Create opportunities for professional development of teachers and principals
- Develop communities of practice using technology
- Develop communities of discourse among users of educational technology (i.e., online discussion lists, print and online publications)



New curricular material is also necessary, including open-ended tools which facilitate the ability of learners and educators to “mess about” and create their own resources for learning

- Identify innovators and experts nationally and develop a cadre of national expertise
- Help communities identify local expertise
- Create a consortium of teacher trainers and provide them with opportunities for professional development
- Facilitate the transfer of “what works” in general studies to Judaic studies
- Identify and disseminate resources for professional development, including online learning opportunities
- Encourage schools of higher education to offer tracks in Jewish educational technology
- Facilitate partnerships between academic institutions and the practitioners

Educational Resource Development

There are many quality educational resources which have already been developed and implemented in educational settings which could be shared with other communities. New curricular material is also necessary, including open-ended tools which facilitate the ability of learners and educators to “mess about” and create their own resources for learning.

Options

- Develop a database of educational resources
- Coordinate the development of curricular guides, including existing materials, and repackage and disseminate the material
- Develop a guide to educational technology
- Create a Jewish educational toolkit to highlight resource materials and the use of technology
- Develop an annotated guide of essential media material (*i.e.*, the ten most popular CD-ROMs and videos) for community media-resource center collections
- Pilot new opportunities for educators to develop materials
- Facilitate dialogue between developers, funders, educators, and end-users
- Lessen the gap between what educators perceive that they need and what is being produced

Financial Resource Development

Educators and developers are often stymied by the capital intensive nature of some technologies. There is a need to help secure financial resources for viable projects as well as more risky research and development innovations. Professional development and equipment also require reliable financial resources.

Options

- Help communities identify local funding sources to integrate technology into their educational settings
- Coordinate discounted purchases of hardware and software
- Develop models of foundation and for-profit partnerships for developing resources
- Assist foundations in identifying promising models of practice and innovative projects
- Create a mechanism to match potential funders with appropriate projects

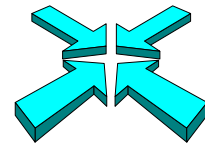
Research and Evaluation

There is very little information with which to paint a community picture in Jewish educational technology. We do not fully understand the challenges of implementing media and technology in Jewish settings. As a consequence, there is no clear picture of what constitutes promising practices in Jewish learning, nor is there a means for coordinating data from individual communities.

...there is no clear picture of what constitutes promising practices in Jewish learning, nor is there a means for coordinating data from individual communities

Options

- Collect data to help communities and foundations make informed decisions
- Coordinate research in educational technology for Jewish learning
- Explore the integration of media and technology through the lens of educational change
- Develop a database of educational technology innovations
- Create assessment tools for using educational technology in a variety of Jewish settings



Advocacy

There is a need to create informed advocacy for the field of Jewish educational technology among lay leadership and professionals to help develop meaningful and creative Jewish lifelong learning.

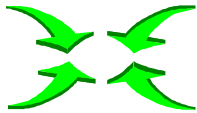
Options

- Create a sense of mission and support with regard to the use of technology in Jewish education
- Create meaningful opportunities to raise the visibility of educational technology on the Jewish communal agenda
- Educate key decision makers (including foundations) about the revolutionary nature of educational technology and how it can be used to further their work

- Develop templates or tools such as handbooks for implementation in communities and schools
- Provide opportunities for stakeholders to dialogue with each other
- Broaden the scope of the conversation beyond the Internet to other media, such as television, video, and CD-ROMs

Marketing and Dissemination

There is a need to facilitate the marketing and dissemination of quality resources and innovative projects to the community. Producers find it difficult to break into the Jewish educational community, and there are many talented educators in the field who have developed creative material which can be distributed beyond their local arena.



Producers find it difficult to break into the Jewish educational community, and there are many talented educators in the field who have developed creative material which can be distributed beyond their local arena

Options

- Develop models of marketing and dissemination of materials
- Facilitate partnerships between producers and distributors
- Coordinate the dissemination of resources produced in the field

Possible Models for Implementation

The Task Force will begin to prioritize JESNA's work in Jewish educational technology. Members suggested different models of implementation, which will be further explored by the Task Force:

- Select particular areas in which to focus
- Develop demonstration sites to generate data and to share expertise
- Develop a clearinghouse or center for media and technology to address these areas
- Cut into other areas of Jewish learning, such as family education, teens, adult Jewish learning, the blurring of school and home, formal and informal education
- Organize a regular conference
- Other

Telecommunications and World Jewish Renewal

Eli N. Evans, President, Charles H. Revson Foundation

Keynote Address:
**“Shaping the 58th Century With 21st Century Technology:
Conference on Media and Technology in Jewish Education
for Developers and Educators”**

Tuesday, June 3, 1997

(reprinted by permission from the author)

The Telecommunications Revolution

Before addressing the Jewish dimension of the telecommunications revolution, let me say a few words about the telecommunications revolution itself.

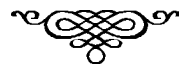
Nicholas Negroponte, founder of the MIT Media Lab, in his recent book, *Being Digital*, states that “computing is not about computers anymore. It is about living.” In Negroponte’s words, “the computer represents the merger of home and office, of work and play.” With regard to education, he states, “schools will change to become more like museums and playgrounds for children to assemble ideas and socialize with other children all over the world.”

It’s not easy for even the most informed observers to understand the shifting sands of change. On any given day, you can pick up a newspaper or turn on the news on television, and read or hear a wide variety of different stories about the Internet and the newest technologies. One recent article described understanding the Internet “as trying to pick up a lemon seed from the kitchen table.” It is difficult, it said, because the Internet operates under a governance idea some call “consensual anarchy.”

We may not always understand new technologies completely, but many more of us are beginning to understand what they can do. Unlike broadcasting and print, which are one-to-many entities with a passive audience, the new media, like the Internet, are many-to-many media, in which everyone with a computer and a modem has the opportunity to become a publisher, a broadcaster, a researcher, a communicator.

It’s no secret that telecommunications are changing the world as we know it. You all know the numbers: fifteen years ago, America was three broadcast networks, PBS, and the local movie theater.

We may not always understand new technologies completely, but many more of us are beginning to understand what they can do. Unlike broadcasting and print... the new media, like the Internet, are many-to-many media, in which everyone with a computer and a modem has the opportunity to become a publisher, a broadcaster, a researcher, a communicator





The two biggest challenges, at this point, are ensuring equitable access and developing creative content

Today:

- Not only do nearly all American homes have TVs, 86 percent have VCRs (95 percent with children have them).
- Cable TV is now available to 92 percent of U.S. homes, and about two-thirds report subscribing. An additional 5 percent of homes receive satellite TV service. More than a third of all homes now receive 40 or more channels, three times as many as five years ago, ten times as many as ten years ago.
- The number of Americans using computers is growing exponentially: by the year 2000, there are expected to be more than 80 million computers in the U.S. While the primary usage continues to be for business, a growing number of households — especially those with children — have computers.
- As of this month, the Nielsen company reports that 50 million North Americans are using the Internet and as many are using E-mail. There are more than 700,000 registered World Wide Web sites, and with the new ease of creating “home pages,” that number is growing daily, if not hourly.

The Challenges: Access and Creativity

The two biggest challenges, at this point, are ensuring equitable access and developing creative content.

We've all heard a great deal of talk over the past few years about the need to ensure that there is equitable access to the Internet, so that no one will be left behind in this revolution. In this country, President Clinton and Vice President Gore have repeatedly called for the building of a “digital information highway,” and for making the hardware and software necessary to utilize it, available in every American school by the year 2000. The Israel Ministry of Education recently made a similar pledge to the schoolchildren of Israel.

As critical as access is, even more critical is creativity, the potential for using these new technologies creatively in the service of education — and, in this case, Jewish education.

A leading scientist from Bell Atlantic briefed foundations some time ago and pointed out that the crisis in the computer revolution was a crisis in creativity. On the walls at headquarters, he said, is a sign reading: “It's the content, stupid.”

For the Jewish community today, there are a huge number of opportunities across many technologies: on cable television in a world of 500 channels and widespread satellite connections; in film and video cassette libraries and rentals; through educational software, CD-ROMs, the Internet, and the Web. With all of them, I believe, our challenge is the same: developing creative content.

Jewish Education and Renewal Through Telecommunications

The Talmud says that “messages that come from the heart, go to the heart.” We have an opportunity to facilitate such messages, to bring together Jews from all over the world.

So, in that spirit, I would like to try to relate new technology to the themes that have animated discussions across the Jewish world in the past few years — of Jewish continuity and education, and of Jewish survival . . . and what we can do to build an interactive community of the Jewish people all over the world.

Where does the Jewish community stand with regard to the telecommunications revolution in 1997?

Television and Film

Let me start with the media we know best — television and film.

In terms of television, we witnessed a glimpse of the power of electronic intimacy during the tragedy of the fall of 1995, at the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin. C-Span transmitted the words and pictures of the gathering of world leaders and their orations into 140 countries, along with the touching family tribute from Noa, his granddaughter, whose simple and moving farewell stirred young people profoundly in Israel and will forever be in our hearts. Television provided a window for worldwide participation and commitment to peace, for which Rabin gave his life, turning the ceremony into a universal resolve. It transformed living rooms around the globe into a vast worldwide amphitheater of shared mourning. Jewish and non-Jewish families — from Jerusalem to New York, Paris and London, from Tel Aviv to Buenos Aires and Moscow — gathered about the electronic hearth during those sad days of aftershock and shared loss.

This outpouring of feelings from world leaders, from non-Jews as well as Jews, was unprecedented in world history. And for us, as American Jews, modern telecommunications provided us with something more: it gave us the opportunity and the means to feel connected to Jews in Israel and all over the world; it united us in sadness and in resolve; it reawakened us to our sense of peoplehood. Jews the world over reaffirmed their connection to Judaism and to the land of their ancestors, brought together by television over the loss of a Jewish son who had changed the course of history.

Yet, at the same time, the limits of our current telecommunications systems meant that much was missed in Israel and elsewhere. Had we been able to continue to share Jewish experience on a worldwide level in November of 1995 — a Jewish C-Span if you will — Israelis as well as Jews from around the world could have been present in a packed Carnegie Hall in New York City for Itzhak Perlman's violin tribute to Rabin; could have joined the 250,000 people at the second Peace

...we witnessed a glimpse of the power of electronic intimacy during the tragedy of the fall of 1995, at the funeral of Yitzhak Rabin



Now rally a week later at the site of the assassination, when *Shalom Haver* became the symbolic refrain of the young generation; or could have shared the emotions in Madison Square Garden 30 days later for the vast outpouring of American Jewish support and unity for Israel's historic path to peace. In the weeks after, Jews around the world could have listened to extended conversations and melodies expressing the profound sorrow of the young people of Israel, who held candlelight vigils in the streets and squares in Israel, who sang and spoke of continuing Rabin's quest for peace.



...we should commit ourselves now to developing one or more channels devoted to Jewish programming that can link American Jews with Jews in Israel and around the world

But this kind of electronic intimacy need not be limited to a national tragedy or a single event. If there were a permanent satellite link creating an international Jewish television network with a Jewish C-Span function, it could be an everyday experience. Such a channel could be anchored in Israel and in America, but committed to interaction with Jewish communities around the world. We could develop special programs for one another in Israel, in the United States, in Europe, Latin America and Australia — wherever there are ideas and talent.

The telecommunications industry in America will soon launch not only the 500-channel cable system, but also the infinite channels of the digital revolution, and it seems to me that we should commit ourselves now to developing one or more channels devoted to Jewish programming that can link American Jews with Jews in Israel and around the world.

A number of elements are already in place:

- *The Jewish Television Network* in Los Angeles will soon be available in seven major American cities, and, with virtually all of Israel now wired for cable, the television industry is growing dramatically in Israel. And, as the telephone, the television set and the computer continue to move toward merging into one multifaceted technology, think of the potential of such a commitment to reach into the Jewish home in every country in the world.

Think about daily news and features bringing detailed reporting about the people and the history of Israel into homes in America and other countries. Think about our families experiencing not just controversies and violent episodes, but the daily life of Israelis. Think about the possibilities for the 50th anniversary of the state of Israel.

And think about Israelis learning about Jewish communities in America and throughout the Diaspora. That this is needed is already clear to the Israeli government: For the past few years, the Ministry of Education has been putting considerable funding into programs with the Hartman Institute and others, to educate Israeli teachers about Jews and Judaism in the Diaspora, particularly Americans, precisely because most Israelis have so little idea about how American Jews live — what we believe, what our religious practices are, how we feel about Israel and how we live as Jews.

- *The Open University of Israel* is already beaming programs in Russian to thousands of students of all ages in a hundred cities and towns across 11 time zones of Russia. Now, they are in the first stages of creating an Open University of the Jewish People that will prepare courses on Jewish history and culture in many languages for Jewish families around the world.
- As you know, many children's programs have already been produced: *Rehov Sumsum* (the Israeli *Sesame Street*) and *Shalom Sesame* (its North American adaptation); *Alef-Bet Blastoff*, the JTN series that was nominated for a 1996 Cable ACE award; *The Animated Haggadah*; and Shari Lewis's *Chanukah* and *Passover* on PBS. These could be expanded to teach Hebrew, holidays and customs, and Bible stories to children in every country. Children around the world could also experience the forthcoming Israeli-Palestinian *Sesame Street*, which will be completed this summer and broadcast in the late fall or winter.
- Similarly, there are many possibilities for cultural and arts programs for such an American-Israeli Jewish channel. In addition to the many individual TV programs and documentary and independent films that already exist, there are scores of ideas for new programming. Just to mention two:

Children around the world could... experience the forthcoming Israeli-Palestinian Sesame Street



Writers and journalists, both in Israel and from other countries, could be interviewed at length about their work, and even be brought together in discussion with one another.

The 92nd Street Y in New York, through its Bronfman Center, could provide the material for programs based on its series of concerts, poetry readings, discussions, debates, and lectures.

- With news programming, the situation is similar: Young and emerging political leaders in Israel and the U.S. and Jewish intellectuals from all countries could participate in frequent electronic international round tables to interact with each other.

When Edgar Bronfman reports to the World Jewish Congress on the status of his talks with the Swiss banks, a worldwide audience could participate. In-depth looks at the Eizenstat report and interviews with Stuart Eizenstat himself could broaden the conversation and the understanding.

The Jewish people all over the world could come to know Jewish personalities from every country — Israeli Cabinet officials, university presidents, playwrights, poets, scholars, religious thinkers, scientists, and corporate and financial leaders. There are so many opportunities for exciting discussions, interviews, and profiles and television biographies.

Film is a critical component, of course — both for any kind of broadcast effort

and for a variety of educational initiatives as well. Most of you have heard me talk before of the Jewish Heritage Video Collection — the collection of 200 feature films, documentaries, independent films, television shows, and PBS series; and 12 courses on such subjects as coming of age, values and acculturation, romance, Yiddish culture, Israel, and the Holocaust. Collections and accompanying teaching materials have already been placed by local donors in synagogues, JCCs, universities, and other institutions in 37 sites across the country. At least another 50 sites will be placed by the end of the year.



What is newest, and perhaps most exciting for the future of the Jewish community is that the computer-based technologies of the Internet and the Web are already being used to build communities of common interest and friendship that transcend geography and age and time

Other major film initiatives include:

- The Brandeis National Center for Jewish Film, headed by Sharon Rivo, has made pioneering efforts to restore and make available to new generations the great treasures of Jewish and Yiddish films; and
- a new joint venture of the Righteous Persons Foundation and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture has created a competitive film fund for the production of new Jewish documentaries and films.

Emerging — and Converging — Technologies

While talking about the new technologies of the Internet, the Web, and CD-ROM separately is necessary at the outset, we need to be constantly aware that all of these technologies are quickly converging with television and telephones. Already, Web-TV makes it possible to turn on our televisions and access the Internet. Soon, it will work the other way, too, and full-motion video will be available on the computer. And Bill Gates promises that access to the new technologies will soon become faster, easier, and continuous and that programming, technologies and distribution will converge. To facilitate this, he has bought into a cable company and has launched an \$8 billion project with Boeing to send up an additional 800 satellites worldwide, each one circling the earth at one thousand miles in space, to facilitate easy interactivity all over the globe, even in underdeveloped countries.

A Flowering of Jewish Web Sites

It's hard to believe, but according to an excellent new book by Irving Green entitled *Judaism on the Web*, there are already more than five thousand different Jewish sites on the World Wide Web, covering everything from discussions of the Bible portion of the week, to courses in Basic Judaism, to an exhibition of the Dead Sea Scrolls. There are dozens of Jewish bulletin boards and "chat rooms" for conversations and study and research. There is access to music, museums, libraries, the *Jerusalem Post* and other publications, holiday information, singles meeting places, and kosher restaurants. This spontaneous outburst of activity can and should be dramatically enlarged and energized with coordination, funding, and support.

What is newest, and perhaps most exciting for the future of the Jewish community is that the computer-based technologies of the Internet and the Web are already being used to build communities of common interest and friendship that transcend geography and age and time. It is interesting to note that the first Jewish groups to have a major presence in cyberspace were not the ones we might have expected, but the Lubavitch movement, which early saw the new technology's potential for reaching the world to deliver its messages. In fact, it is only recently that almost every major Jewish organization and institution has begun to catch on and catch up. Now, students and faculty at Hebrew University and the Weizmann Institute are beginning to be in regular touch with their colleagues at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and Hebrew Union College — as well as Rockefeller University, the Sorbonne, Oxford University, and the University of South Africa. Worldwide ORT in England is building a program of Hebrew and Bar and Bat Mitzvah instruction and is beginning to make it available online to young people in places where no teachers are available — like parts of the former Soviet Union and South America, as well as small towns in Montana, Alaska, and Mississippi.

The growth in home computer sales offers a rare opportunity to launch a Jewish educational and cultural renaissance in the Jewish home



Jewish Community Online is the first truly comprehensive Jewish site on the Net, with AOL giving it a built-in audience and a capacity to add features all the time. It has a newsstand (with publications including the *Jewish Forward*, the *Jerusalem Post*, *Moment*, *Sh'ma*, and the local Jewish papers from Philadelphia, San Francisco, Portland, and other cities); a bookstore; local, national, and international bulletin boards; a searchable database of recent articles from around the world; chat rooms for different ages, special discussions with authors, rabbis, and teachers; a basic Introduction to Judaism course, with explanations of all the holidays, a guide to "what happens in synagogue," and, most recently, a complete transliteration of the Friday night service; a forum called *Ask the Rabbi*, with answers provided by Orthodox, Traditional, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Post-Denominational rabbis; and links to hundreds of Jewish sites on the Web.

Speaking of AOL's Jewish Community Online, which was originally created in San Francisco and then picked up by AOL, as an experiment, I recently went into a chat room and asked "Who here has ever attended Brandeis camp at the Brandeis-Bardin Institute in California?" Within minutes, I had responses from 15 people, and we broke off from the larger group into a private chat area, creating an instant "virtual community" for a wonderful hour of reminiscing about our experiences.

Our goal must be to conceive new, innovative programs that link young Israelis to young people in America, families in Paris to families in Tel Aviv and Los Angeles, students in London to students in Moscow, Jerusalem, and New York, and congregations in Latin America to congregations in North America, the Middle East, and Asia.

The Creative Potential of CD-ROMs

The growth in home computer sales offers a rare opportunity to launch a Jewish educational and cultural renaissance in the Jewish home. It turns out the Jewish people have been in training for the computer revolution for 2,500 years. It is uncanny, but the Talmud is organized in virtually the same manner as an interactive CD-ROM, grouping commentaries around a single word or phrase or concept in the text. CD-ROMs enable us to go another step — to add video art and additional text. Israel is already a center of software creativity and a leading creative force in the production of CD-ROMs. And, there, as here, it is the province of the young: just visit the leading CD-ROM companies, where the average age is 25 years old.

A great deal of creative activity is already under way. For example:

- The entire 32-volume *Encyclopedia Judaica* has just been released on CD-ROM.
- CD-JEMM in Israel is currently producing an animated Haggadah and an animated Hanukkah CD-ROM.
- In the next few years, you will be able to experience the Holocaust Museum in Washington and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem without traveling farther than the computer in your family room. Similarly, WNET/Channel 13 in New York is about to release a disc that will enable you to tour the Tenement Museum in NYC; and in San Francisco, a new Jewish museum is in the planning stages that has a worldwide Internet strategy as an integral part of its mission.
- As the storage capacity of CD-ROMs increases with digital compression, it is already possible to put an enormous amount of data on a single disc. WNET/Channel 13 is also working to produce a CD-ROM in the new digital video format — known as DVD — from Abba Eban's *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* series that will let users experience and interact with every period of Jewish history. In addition to seeing the nine hours of the TV series itself in high definition video, users will be able to view more than 5,000 art objects from the Louvre, the British Museum, the Vatican Collection, the Israel Museum, Luxor and other leading museums in the world. The DVD technology will allow a user to move with a click from the video to art objects, to archeological sites, to biblical texts, to scholarly articles, to biographies, to photographs. Hopefully, since the series has been broadcast in 17 countries, including the former Soviet Union, the disc, too, will be a global project in many languages, from Arabic, French, and Russian to Japanese. Hopefully, too, it will eventually be an Internet site, with a full range of discussion groups for all faiths.
- Steven Spielberg's ambitious *Voices of the Shoah* project is now collecting



The DVD technology will allow a user to move with a click from the video to art objects, to archeological sites, to biblical texts, to scholarly articles, to biographies, to photographs

50,000 survivor testimonies and simultaneously organizing them on discs, with background research and educational material, for all ages.

New Technologies, New Possibilities

"Teach thy children," the Talmud instructs us, and many opportunities for Jewish education already exist. In addition to those I've already mentioned, videoconferencing is emerging as an interesting means for providing education to far-flung audiences. While not yet widely available to individual users, this technology will eventually be part of the range of options provided by the Internet. Already, the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies is using videoconferencing technology to train teachers in Milwaukee in advanced methods of Jewish education. And recently the American Hillel organization linked up Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz to student groups all across America and in Australia, and the young people were able to learn Talmud from him and ask him questions directly. Steinsaltz also enters an Intel facility in Jerusalem once a month to teach a class in Los Angeles. He hopes to broaden it to other cities.

"Teach thy children," the Talmud instructs us, and many opportunities for Jewish education already exist



Indeed, thanks to the Internet, thousands of people are today studying Talmud with teachers in every country and across national boundaries. For instance, the Jewish Theological Seminary is now experimenting with a Talmud course online. Similarly, Rabbi Judy Abrams has established Maqom, a school "located in Houston, Texas and cyberspace" for "the spiritual study of Jewish texts." In addition to a weekly discussion of the Torah portion (through the Jewish Community Network), Maqom also offers study programs in Talmud and Rabbinic literature, a new Jewish-Christian discussion group, and a service to locate a "cyber-hevruta" or study partner.

I recently asked a number people for their ideas and let me give you some examples of activities and plans that are already underway:

- AT&T is experimenting with a new technology that will allow Pinchas Zuckerman in Minneapolis to conduct Master classes with his students in New York and Israel — they can see him and he can see them.
- Thanks to Shamash, Jerusalem 1, and other servers and navigators, Internet users can already use their computers to explore the card catalogues of libraries not only in the United States but also in Israel, by downloading Hebrew-reading programs. Soon, they hope, users will be able to do research directly from libraries all over the world, as more and more documents, books, and articles are made available online.
- Yossi Abramowitz is the founder of the online *Jewish Family and Life Magazine* which he reports is generating 15,000 "hits" or visits a month. He hopes to create 18 of what he calls "Web-zines," magazine-like Websites on a wide variety of Jewish themes, from Shabbat observance to holidays and

parenting.



Now what is needed is the planning and production funding to transform Jewish education and communication in the next century with a wide range of educational software for the home and school

- Lambda, an organization in Israel, one of whose partners is the former director of Israel Educational Television, is developing CD-ROMs of different books of the Bible, which will enable users to explore a wide range of textual interpretations — from the writings of the Rabbis to videotaped conversations with modern scholars.
- The “Virtual Jerusalem” site provides live pictures of the Western Wall in Jerusalem 24 hours a day and a way to send messages to its crevices from your home computer. It includes a walking tour of Jerusalem and received 9 million “hits” or visits from 1 million addresses last December, obviously not all of them Jewish. Over time, this kind of site provides interesting possibilities for interfaith connections.
- The Bill Moyers television series, *Genesis — A Living Conversation*, had the largest accompanying Internet strategy of any program in public broadcasting history. Thousands of people downloaded the weekly teaching material or had it e-mailed directly to them, and tens of thousands posted messages on PBS bulletin boards or on bulletin boards on other sites — Larry Yudelson’s Jewish Community Network ran an active discussion of each week’s show, drawing more participants than any other JCN discussion; a Washington, D.C., group ran an interfaith “chat session” on AOL’s Jewish Community Online site each week right after the program. Moyers himself was a guest on an online chat on AOL, sponsored by USA Weekend — more than 300 people signed in to a lively Q and A session that lasted for more than 90 minutes on a Sunday night. This is just one example of how public broadcasting and the Internet can be linked together, using the visibility of public broadcasting to attract visitors to the Net in order to continue the conversation.

The Challenge for Jewish Education

What’s coming next? What needs to be done? What can we — as educators, funders, and communal leaders — contribute?

Clearly, there are endless numbers of ideas. Now what is needed is the planning and production funding to transform Jewish education and communication in the next century with a wide range of educational software for the home and school. We have the tip of the iceberg; now we must construct the iceberg itself.

Let me begin by stating the obvious: I believe it is critical for all of us to commit ourselves to bringing the telecommunications revolution to bear in a major way on Jewish education and culture.

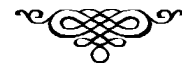
I submit that it is a key to Jewish renewal because it is a way into the home and into the heads and hearts of young people, of children, and of families. It can

renew our schools, empower our teachers, and allow our best institutions and most inspiring teachers into our homes and the lives of our children and grandchildren. The technological revolution does not replace the gifted teacher — but it does represent an extraordinary resource for the teacher. It offers new ways to interact with a broader world, opening doors to exciting new visual, textual, and intellectual discoveries and engaging students with Jewish history.

It is our generation's challenge for the next century. It can create community, tell our story; it is infinite midrash, our electronic Talmud. What is happening is as profound as when our ancestors made the transition from the scroll to the book. We Jews became known as the people of the book and of "the word"; in the next century the telecommunications revolution will allow us to recover this proud past.

...a new, central clearinghouse for Jewish media... would ensure that those interested can easily find out what is available and how to get it

A New Creative Initiative: An International Fund for Jewish Media and Technology



How do we go about doing this? Linking up Israel with Diaspora communities, and finding new and creative ways to impart Jewish teaching, are profoundly important tasks. Much of the framework for these activities already exists, but it is in its earliest stages — still very diffuse and of varying degrees of quality. That framework can and should be strengthened and sustained by funding and imagination, and there are at least two critical new initiatives that have been proposed that I believe deserve serious attention by this group and others.

The first initiative, which originated with Josh Fidler of the Morton J. and Louise D. Macks Family Foundation, is a new, central clearinghouse for Jewish media which would ensure that those interested can easily find out what is available and how to get it.

A second, larger idea that has been discussed by many people over the past few years is the creation of an International Fund for Jewish Media and Technology — a major new institution in Jewish life that would be independent and free standing, with international participation from a constellation of our most outstanding leaders and personalities in many fields. The facilitating body should receive substantial funding from Jewish communities and from Jewish philanthropists around the world, but it should be independent of all existing agencies. It must be mission-driven with a high degree of credibility, free of a commercial motive, capable of imaginative decision-making, with quality as its hallmark. It should not build a large bureaucracy or production facilities but function like an international public/private foundation, providing grant and venture philanthropy funds to many different initiatives in Israel, the U.S., the United Kingdom, Russia, France, Eastern Europe, Latin America, Australia and in other Jewish communities all over the world. Supporting the best and most talented people with the most creative ideas should be its sole mission. The Jewish communities in all countries, whose children and families will benefit, can eventually be asked to contribute, but start-

up funds will have to come from major donors. It should come into being with at least \$5-10 million a year for five years.

The Catalytic Role of Jewish Organizational Leadership



The telecommunications revolution gives us the opportunity to become one people again, for our young people to come to know one another... for our best teachers and rabbis to extend their knowledge and share their wisdom, for our experiences to become joint and communal ones, even across time and space

Meetings of concerned and involved leaders in Jewish education are critical, because they can help to produce an action plan across a wide range of activities that would strengthen the common culture and shared experience of Jews wherever they live.

In addition, consultations should be held with leading communications industry leaders in Israel and the U.S., and with outstanding creative talent in film, television and computer technology to develop a partnership that can bring these new channels of Jewish unity into being.

Leading thinkers believe the world is in the midst of a revolution as profound as the industrial revolution. It is the information age and for the Jewish people, it is already filled with possibility. As Israel moves into a new period of self-confidence and economic maturity, it is time to forge a new kind of partnership with Jewish communities around the world based on mutual respect and shared experiences.

The Next Generation, The Next Century

Let me end by speaking to you for a moment as a father:

I have a 12-year-old who takes the computer for granted just as adults now accept the fax machine, CD-ROMs, and 50 channels on a television set as a natural part of the home and office, although each one is less than a decade old. For him, computer technology is like taking a drink of water. In educational terms, it is not separate from his school and books but all one system, and whether he is using the computer as a dictionary, an encyclopedia, or for spell-checking a paper, it is part of his world of learning. He “talks” to his friends and teachers on E-mail, even when they are on vacation in California or with parents in Israel, and does not think it remarkable. Negroponte says that if you want to know the future, watch the 10- to 12-year-olds. Soon, all computer and television programming will be pouring from a single screen, and that is our challenge — there must be a Jewish presence available to our children and it must be first-rate, creative, attractive, and engaging.

The Jewish leaders of today and the dreamers of tomorrow must seek to create a Jewish world that restores the feeling of family, of common destiny and common experience to Jews in every country around the world. The telecommunications revolution gives us the opportunity to become one people again, for our young people to come to know one another, for our Jewish communities to become

neighbors, for our scientists and writers and poets to interact with one another, for our best teachers and rabbis to extend their knowledge and share their wisdom, for our experiences to become joint and communal ones, even across time and space. The field aches for Medicis, for venture philanthropists, who can provide the level of sustenance to build this new world.

The light in the candles of Israeli youth, which the whole world witnessed in the aftermath of the Rabin assassination, is the light of hope. We must not let it go out but must use it to light the way to a new world of Jewish unity and interaction. The opportunities to use technology are all about us, waiting to be harnessed in the next century to the great task of Jewish memory, education and renewal.

The opportunities to use technology are all about us, waiting to be harnessed in the next century to the great task of Jewish memory, education and renewal



Members of the JESNA Task Force on Technology

Harlene Appelman, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit
Elaine Cohen, Solomon Schechter of Essex and Union, NJ
Margaret Honey, Center for Children and Technology, NY
Martin Kaminer, Kaminer Family Foundation
Brad Lakritz, Bureau of Jewish Education, San Francisco
Jeff Liberman, Boston Bureau of Jewish Education
Morton J. Macks, Morton J. And Louise D. Macks Family Foundation
Lenny Matanky, Goldman Computer Center, Associated Talmud Torahs, Chicago
Anne Rothenberg, Bet Shraga Hebrew Academy, Albany, NY
Marty Schloss, Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York
Sara Seligson, Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York
Susan Shevitz, JESNA Board, Brandeis University
Shirley Solomon, JESNA Board
Peter Sommer, Brooklyn Friends School, NY
Blanche Sosland, JESNA Board, Park College
Neil Sosland, Kansas City
Michael Starr, Jewish Theological Seminary
Dov Winer, MOFET, Israel
Jon Woocher, JESNA
Yehuda Wurtzel, Producer
Lois Zachary, JESNA Board

Chair: Jeff Rothenberg
Staff: Caren Levine

Additional Resources

Eli Birnbaum, Jewish University In Cyberspace, WZO
Nora Contini, Jewish Community Online, AOL
Meir Fachler, Jerusalem Multimedia Productions
Chaim Feder, Education Matters, Jerusalem
Josh Fidler, Macks Family Foundation
Shahaf Gal, Centre for Educational Technology, Tel Aviv
Carol Japha, Charles H. Revson Foundation
Larry Sternberg, Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University

JESNA
Jewish Education Service of North America
730 Broadway • New York, NY 10003

Phone: (212) 529-2000

Fax: (212) 529-2009

Web: <http://www.jesna.org>

Email: info@jesna.org