TREASURE HUNTING FOR NEW JUDAIC RESOURCES ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

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The World Wide Web (WWW) has opened up new sources of free information to individuals as well as professionals working at universities and colleges, museums, and smaller institutions. These repositories of digital knowledge, popularly known as digital libraries, have created exciting possibilities for enhanced scholarly communication. E-books and documents, sound recordings, visual images, three-dimensional objects, and previously hidden archival treasures are now regularly appearing online. Significantly, many of these resources are not indexed or described in a way that allows them to be easily found on the Web. The ongoing challenge is to find ways to make it easier for researchers to learn about, locate, and use these resources.

Digital Resources on Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews

Sephardic and Mizrahi studies, to take one example, have benefited from this trend. Among the newly digitalized primary resources is University of California, Davis's "Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews"(www.sephardifolklit.org/flsj), a multimedia online archive of ballads and oral literature in Judeo-Spanish. Site visitors can view transcriptions of the texts or listen to entire recordings from an online audio archive of ballads. The site is searchable by key words and phrases.

At the University of Pennsylvania, The Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image (SCETI, sceti.library.upenn.edu/morais) recently has made available on the Web two important Judaic archival collections. The Morais Ledger is a digital publication of a scrapbook that belonged to Sabato Morais (1823–1897), a Sephardic Jewish leader and the principal founder of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. The Morais Ledger can be searched by key word or via a hypertext index linked to each item. SCETI also has mounted a searchable Web site of *genizah* fragments from the University of Pennsylvania and Cambridge University. The Penn-Cambridge Genizah pilot project provides high-resolution color scans and detailed descriptive cataloging of each fragment, as well as easy navigation and innovative display features.

The Seminar für Sprachen und Kulturen des Vorderen Orients Semitistik at Universität Heidelberg has created the Semitisches Tonarchiv (SemArch, www.semarch.uni-hd.de). This project provides a Web-based archive of sound recordings of Semitic languages and their dialects.

The Sephardic Folk Literature Archive, Genizah Fragment Project, Morais Ledger database, and the SemArch are four of a small but growing number of digital collections that can be used by Jewish studies scholars teaching and researching Sephardic and Mizrahi studies.

Federated Searching

Yet, how can one actually find these archives? Jewish studies, because of its interdisciplinary nature, has its scholarly and bibliographic resources scattered among a variety of subject- and thematic-specific research tools. A researcher may not even know how or what to choose from among the broad range of electronic databases and search tools that their library subscribes to or makes available to them. As a response to the growing need to help scholars locate the wide variety of primary and secondary sources that may exist in a library's or institution's Web environment, federated searching (also known as meta-searching or cross-database searching) technology is being developed that allows searchers to look for information across many resources with a single search. For example, a patron can simultaneously search across all of a library's catalogs, full-text and bibliographic databases, and Internet search engines through a single easy-to-use Web interface. Assuming that the search engine is well-designed, researchers will no longer need to perform multiple searches of a variety of disconnected resources, each with their own search and query language and display formats.

Subject Portals

Individuals and institutions maintain a number of directories of Jewish studies resources that are sometimes erroneously referred to as "portals." To date, these for the most part are not much more than listings or static collections of links to other Web sites, and do not offer the ability to search by keyword or content. Two such services that have recently offered search options are the Academic Guide to Jewish History (link.library.utoronto.ca/jewishhistory) and the Jewish History Resource Center (www.dinur.org/resources).

Subject portals or gateways are search services that bring together information and resources from a variety of sources specific to a subject area and work very much in the same way as library catalogs. They organize and consolidate the data into an easily navigable format. They direct their researchers towards content that is freely available although difficult to find using a non-specific search engine. Many of these services offer reliability through standardized policies and procedures.

The Humbul Humanities Hub (www.humbul.ac.uk), a project of the Research Discovery Network (RDN) and the Humanities Computing Unit at Oxford University, provides a "portal" or "gateway" to a growing number of evaluated resources in the arts and humanities. Sites are selected on the basis of criteria developed in partnership with the research libraries and universities that contribute to this service; individuals with expertise in the relevant subject disciplines and following consistent standards and practices catalog these sites. Links are automatically checked on a daily basis and entries are updated regularly. More than two hundred resources relevant to Jewish studies can be easily located via this catalog. Researchers can refine their search query by type of resource, language, subject, or period and can also recommend new items for inclusion.

Open Archives Initiative (OAI)
Another type of search service is based on the Open Archives Initiative (OAI, www.openarchives.org). This project emerged to help researchers locate electronic resources that were not visible to traditional search engines. Known as the "invisible Web," these resources exist in databases and catalogs that search engines have no direct access to. The OAI approach to this problem is to define standards for "metadata

harvesting." A repository or database publishes information about the resources it contains, known as "metadata" (data about
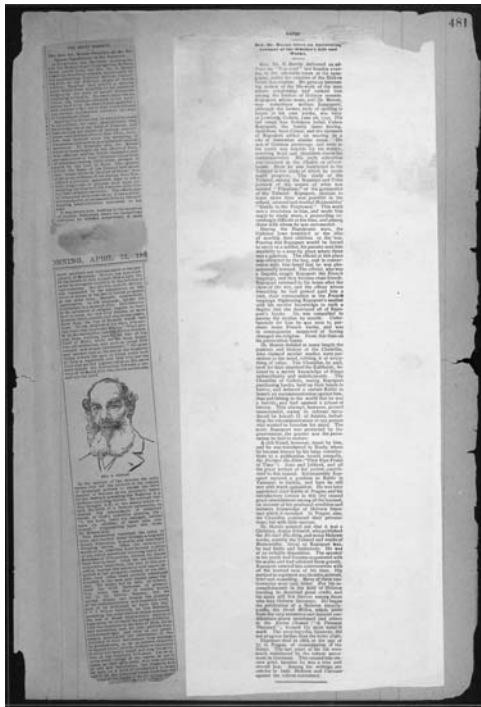
Page from the Morais Ledger, as viewed online at sceti.library.upenn.edu/morais.
Courtesy of The Schoenberg Center for Electronic Text and Image at the University of Pennsylvania.

data). Search service providers "harvest" this metadata and thus index the resources in the repository. The metadata provides descriptive information about the type of a particular resource and its content.

Initially, OAI provided access to pre-prints and other e-prints. Since then it has expanded to help researchers locate all types of digital objects including dissertations and other types of texts, images, and video and audio files. Historically, archives and other repositories have followed a variety of different methods to describe their holdings. OAI was developed to provide standardization and sharing of information about collections. Freely accessible services such as the University of Michigan's OAIster project (www.oaister.org), use OAI technologies to locate digital resources that would otherwise be "hidden" from the user. Not only

does OAIster provide searchers with information (metadata) about a particular resource, but they also can link up to the digital object or text itself. So far, OAIster has indexed more than four and a half million scholarly documents and images from 396 institutions or repositories (as of January 6, 2005). A search on "Jewish and dissertation" returned thirty-three records "harvested" from nineteen repositories or institutions; the keyword "Jewish" and resource type "video" retrieved records for seven video files available from three repositories (Library of Congress American History Project, OpenVideo Project, T-Space University of Toronto's Institutional Repository; searched Jan. 17, 2005).

Conclusion
The Jewish studies community is starting to take advantage of Web-based technologies to provide open and free access to its cultural and intellectual resources. A small number of projects are in various stages of development, but these often lack the funding and/or technical know-how to fully bring them to completion. Significantly, many Jewish materials and resources can be found on the Web that have been brought online by various interdisciplinary and non-Jewish specific projects and initiatives. It is imperative that our community of scholars and institutions work together and create formal and informal partnerships to develop new, or take advantage of, existing standards, to create high-quality digital resources and provide more uniform and easier access.

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