

To our readers . . .

Having published a series of double issues, *The American Jewish Archives Journal* resumes its semiannual format with the appearance of this edition. Readers will note that the length of the journal has been downsized to approximately one half the size used for the double issues. It is our hope that this new/old format proffers the journal's familiar fare in a size that will now make it possible to ingest its contents in two or three hours of pleasurable reading.

Though the journal's dimensions have returned to its more manageable semiannual measurement, the holdings of the AJA continue to grow. Every year, the AJA acquires dozens of new collections and, among them, there will be two or three institutional or personal collections that are of extraordinary historical value. Our Chief Archivist regularly informs our readers of these new acquisitions in a helpful essay that appears annually.

The scholars and researchers who visit The Marcus Center scour two or three of our many large collections and, oftentimes, they are subsequently able to revise our current thinking or offer new interpretations about past events on the basis of documents that previous scholars may not have seen. In other instances, a newly acquired collection may actually enable researchers to tell a story that has gone untold. Some newly acquired holdings shed light on a subject that has heretofore received scant attention. The arrival of a new collection of documents oftentimes furnishes scholars with data that will ultimately shed new light on a little-known chapter of American Jewish history. The articles in this issue of our journal illustrate how this process unfolds.

For example, Rafael Medoff's essay on Felix Warburg draws extensively from the Warburg holdings here at the American Jewish Archives. His research has enabled him to refine our understanding of Warburg's attitude toward Zionism and his position on the drive to Jewish statehood. Cornelia Wilhelm's interesting article on the United Order of True Sisters (UOTS) examines a critically important Jewish women's association that has been largely overlooked by historians of the American Jewish experience. Dr. Wilhelm's essay was made possible when, just a few years ago, the UOTS voted to place its historical papers in the AJA. Meanwhile, Shuly Rubin Schwartz's documentary analysis of Rebecca A. Brickner's correspondence from

Palestine in the early 1930s took shape after Professor Schwartz was serving as a research fellow at The Marcus Center.

So, as we have repeatedly stressed, the efflorescence of American Jewish history is inexorably tied to the growth of our archival repositories. To the unindoctrinated, sustaining the growth of a major repository like The Marcus Center may appear to be a relatively simple matter. Staff members merely find historical collections and keep them organized on a shelf. In actuality, the task is much more daunting, and The Marcus Center – like any academic center – relies on a vast network of supporters and counselors as it fulfills its mission.

Keenly observant readers will surely take note of the steady proliferation of boards, councils, and consortiums listed in the journal. These various committees play an integral role in the life of The Marcus Center and, as such, we are pleased to publicize in our journal the names of those who give so generously of themselves. Each of the four bodies named herein labor diligently on our behalf, and collectively they contribute to the overall betterment of our institution.

The Academic Advisory and Editorial Board (AA&EB) is comprised of distinguished scholars who provide The Marcus Center with scholarly counsel on a wide range of matters, including the Center's overall academic program, the AJA's acquisition policy, its Fellowship & Visiting Scholars program, and its publication initiatives. The AA&EB also functions as an editorial board for *The American Jewish Archives Journal* (AJAJ), providing the journal's editors with counsel regarding the journal's academic content and to advise the editor in developing the AJAJ's policies.

The B'nai Ya'akov Council is a colloquium of several dozen Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) rabbinic alumni, all of whom possess a special interest in American Jewish history and, concomitantly, in The Marcus Center's *raison d'être*. In addition to the annual support The Marcus Center receives from the individual members of the B'nai Ya'akov Council, this group meets annually to offer The Marcus Center's Executive Director advice on how the institution can better support American rabbis and synagogues in their effort to learn more about the history of the American Jew. Frequently, the members of the B'nai Ya'akov Council also function as scouts for primary source documents that ultimately come to the AJA. In doing so, the members of the B'nai Ya'akov Council perpetuate a tradition that goes back to the institution's

earliest days. For soon after the AJA came into existence in 1947, many HUC-JIR rabbinic alumni found wonderful collections of documents in their student pulpits and a variety of out-of-the-way attics. Many of these same rabbis went on to pursue distinguished careers in the rabbinate and, in due time, these men and women donated their papers to the AJA. In short, American rabbis have played a pivotal role in expanding the size of our collection by identifying and procuring for the AJA an array of significant historical documents. The members of the B'nai Ya'akov Council have come together to carry on the vital work that was done by hundreds of their rabbinic forebears.

Two years ago, nearly two dozen independent scholars and lay leaders came together to create The Marcus Center's Ezra Consortium, men and women who are interested in deepening their understanding of Jewish life in America. The members of this consortium have agreed to attend a conference which focuses on the work of The Marcus Center, the growth of its collection, and academic presentations from some of the leading scholars in the field of American Jewish history. In addition, the members of the Ezra Consortium play an active role in preserving our American Jewish heritage by identifying and acquiring additional documentary collections that will enhance the American Jewish Archives' collection. Finally, the Ezra Consortium seeks to provide much needed financial support for new projects that The Marcus Center is always hoping to actualize.

In this issue of our journal, readers will note the appearance of yet another panel of experts who have agreed to serve The Marcus Center. The Educational Advisory Council has recently convened to provide The Marcus Center's Executive Director with counsel on how the institution can serve Jewish educators who are interested in exposing their students to the study of the American Jewish experience. The distinguished members of our Educational Advisory Council convene semiannually in an effort to clarify The Marcus Center's overall educational vision and to bring those who reconstruct the past into a closer collaboration with those who teach American Jewish history. In the very near future, The Marcus Center will begin offering Educational Fellowships to Jewish educators who are interested in using the AJA's holdings to enhance their work as teachers of American Jewish history. The Educational Advisory Council is

presently at work on the development of a useful framework for a fellowship program of this sort.

The existence of these four boards spurs an institution like ours to reach for novel challenges and to advance steadily toward new achievements. Fresh ideas and diverse opinions fertilize the soil of creative thought. The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives is fortunate in having drawn so many outstanding individuals into these circles of support. In the years ahead, we hope that those who read this journal will sense they are reaping a harvest of new knowledge that has been made possible by the cooperative contributions of so many learned and committed advisors.

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