

Collaboration on an International Scale: Building a Digital Library of Hebrew Journals



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After nearly 2 years of global use, how might we evaluate what we have built?

INTRODUCTION

JSTOR collaborated on a project envisioned and led by the National Library of Israel and the University of Haifa Library to create a large-scale digital collection of scholarly journals in Hebrew. The final journal was released in 2015. The resulting usage offers a new opportunity to view the near term outcomes of such a collection. Contrasted against worldwide library holdings, it is possible to examine the global circulation of the publications' digital surrogates. How might we learn from and evaluate the outcomes of what we have built? This exploratory, evaluative method permits not only analysis, but also critique, and is one point of departure for the ways that usage data can or cannot show us what occurs in the transition from print to digital.

ABOUT THE CORPUS AND THE COLLABORATION

The serials examined are **51 full-text titles** published entirely in Hebrew. About JSTOR today:

- Consists of over 10 million academic journals, 2,500 journals covering 60 disciplines from over 1,200 publishing entities, spread across 60 countries.

It is on top of this interdisciplinary corpus that the Hebrew periodicals were built, formed out of a collaboration that began in 2010:

- Intended to address a lacuna in research resources for Hebrew readers.
- **Led by partners**, allowing project team to formulate its goals in advance.
- Journals digitized to existing JSTOR specifications to create uniformity with JSTOR corpus, utilizing paper copies sourced from publishers, and from partner print collections.
- JSTOR introduced right-to-left reading order functionality



- Funded by private foundation funding and by the Education Council of Israel, with JSTOR assuming costs of preservation and maintenance.

METHOD

Print holdings were examined for all 51 titles:

- **11 titles have almost no print presence in Worldcat.**
- **401 unique institutions** held one or more print copy of a journal in Hebrew, spread across 20 countries
- **58%** of these were in the United States

- **7%** each were from Israel, Germany, & the Netherlands

Global usage of the digital versions on JSTOR was then analyzed:

- Usage was spread across **111 countries.**
- **90% of this usage came from Israel.**
- Numerous countries where almost no records of print copies in OCLC existed saw usage, such as **Egypt & South Africa.**

ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATIONS

- **An assumption frequently present in digital projects: simple placement of items online will yield global use.**
- Also an assumption that Hebrew, due to its nature as being the national language in Israel only, would be limited.
- Data are a starting place rather than a trend, and can be useful in productively challenging and complicating such assumptions.
- OCLC contains a limitation, through not being in wide use globally. A need exists analyze alongside other national union catalogs, especially those in Israel. Data may point to global locuses where unanticipated readers may exist.
- The absence of print copies of 11 titles in OCLC is notable: 3 of these titles alone, *Gerontology & Geriatrics*, *Issues in Special Education*, and *Israeli Sociology* together represent **12%** of the usage.
- Contrast between low presence in OCLC and high use on JSTOR may be one indicator of success in filling an unmet need among Hebrew readers, for widely accessible academic journal content, especially in the social sciences. Data may be useful in pointing to other unmet needs.

INFLUENCE OF STRATEGIC DECISIONS

- **Mechanisms for access** must also be considered: These are driven by policy choices.
- National Library of Israel provisioned remote access for user within Israel.
- The care the libraries have invested in preserving these periodicals demonstrates their active role in asserting the value of these publications. This care is now borne out in the usage data.
- All the entities take an active role in their individual acts: scanning, creating metadata, creating cataloging records, and provisioning access. These at first appear to be blunt acts, but each has a substantial significant impact on shaping the outcomes.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR COLLABORATIONS

- Those creating digital special collections can seek other innovative ways to understand how digital materials are meaningful to readers.
- Consider discovery and access in critical ways.
- Transition from print to digital not complete simply when an object goes online: transition is a permeable phase, not a bright line.
- Preservation and discovery are all ongoing. **Evaluation should also be an ongoing aspect of digital projects.**
- We as a community would also do well to **include entities from many viewpoints in dialogue**, as we are all part of the same ecosystem, and each are taking an active role in asserting the value of the collections being created.