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Out of the Box and Into the Bookstore: Non-Traditional Use of the Bookstore

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The **National Yiddish Book Center** is a combination library, cultural center and museum located on the campus of **Hampshire College** in Amherst, Massachusetts. It is housed in a group of connected buildings resembling a shtetl (a small Jewish town or village, formerly found in Eastern Europe of the 19th century). The **Center** was founded in 1980 by **Aaron Lansky** who was then a student of Yiddish literature at **McGill University**. During his studies he realized that many of the books written in Yiddish were being discarded as native speakers grew older and succeeding generations stopped speaking the language. He began a focused effort to save the remaining books before they disappeared. There was even a legendary midnight foray to New York City on a phone tip to rescue books from a dumpster that reflected the urgency of their work. **Mr. Lansky** was aided by "zamlers" throughout the world. **Zamler** is Yiddish for "compiler." "It means a person who gathers scattered things to form a collection. **Zamlers** make their collections pursuing a mission, passionately committed to their purpose," **Mr. Lansky** stated.

It is estimated that there are approximately 35,000 discreet titles in Yiddish, not counting pamphlets and other ephemera. The **Center** has now collected over 1.5 million copies of those books and they have stored them in their library and warehouse. They have shared their collection by donating books to over 450 libraries and institutions throughout the world. They continue to receive over 1,000 books per week from all over the world. They recently received a collection from Zimbabwe where a Jewish farming community had died out.

For nearly 1,000 years Yiddish was the language of over three-fourths of the Jewish world. It was spoken by 11 million people before the Holocaust and it is now spoken by around 4 million people worldwide. Yiddish is used by nearly 250,000 people in the U.S. (mainly in Orthodox and Hassidic communities), 750,000 in Russia, and in communities throughout the world. Yiddish (which simply means Jewish) is written in the Hebrew script while its vocabulary is basically German with borrowings from Hebrew, Slavic and the Romance languages. It was the *lingua franca* for the **Ashkenazi Jews** throughout Eastern Europe and it reached a peak of literary expression between 1864 and 1939. The beginning of this modern period of Yiddish literature is popularly attributed to the works of **Mendel Mocher Sforim** ("Mendele the Itinerant Book Seller") who wrote stories about the common people and life in the shtetls. Another important writer of that period was **Sholom Aleichem**. In the U.S., Yiddish was central to Jewish theater, film, radio, journalism and literature during a period between 1880 and 1930. In 1978 the Yiddish writer **Isaac Bashevis Singer** won the **Nobel Prize** for literature.

We all speak some Yiddish everyday, probably without realizing it. The pithy phrases and down to earth vocabulary of the language are a natural for Americans. Words such as **Mike Myer's** "firklemp," as well as nosh, schlep,

kibitz, zaftig, golem, and less obviously Yiddish words, such as glitch, mishmash and klutz have all entered the mainstream of English where they give us a glimpse into the earthiness, humor and directness of the language. Check out **Leo Rosten's** *Joys of Yiddish* or www.ariga.com/yiddish.shtml for more examples.

With the rebirth of interest in Yiddish the **Center** soon found itself pressed to supply the growing need for books. Even with more than 1.5 million books in storage, the **Center** experienced more demand than ever for copies of their scarce titles. Trying to preserve their thousands of books in storage became a pressing issue as well. After studying some of the newer technologies available for preserving their collection, they decided to digitize the collection and offer the books as Print on Demand. Two of the key people in starting and running the project are **Faye Zipkowitz** and **Gabriel Hamilton**. **Ms. Zipkowitz**, the cataloger at the **Center** and a long time educator and librarian, initiated the cataloging and organizing of the collection, while **Hamilton** has spearheaded the digitizing and POD effort.

Now over 11,000 scarce Yiddish books have been digitized and they are offered as Print on Demand books. The **Center** plans on digitizing all 35,000 extant titles (20,000 from their own collection and 15,000 borrowed from other libraries). The seed money for the project was given by **Steven Spielberg** and it has been named in his honor as the "Steven Spielberg Digital Yiddish Library." **Spielberg** was drawn to the concept of preserving the Jewish heritage in a new medium. Nearly 3 million dollars has been donated since his initiative.

Storage, scanning and digitizing is handled by the **Pitney Bowes Company** at their Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania plant. The books are all printed in a standard 6x9 inch format on acid free paper. Depending on the

fragility of the pages, it can take from 40 minutes to 2 1/2 hours to scan a book, but only 3-4 minutes to print one from the stored text. The books all share the design of the renowned book designer **Paul Bacon**. One of the added benefits of having the texts stored digitally is the ability to easily create anthologies and collections. The flexibility that comes with digitizing will also allow the **Center** to offer their texts on the Web one day.

VTLS manages the project for the **Center**, handling cataloging and database management. Books can be purchased from the **Center's Website** (www.yiddishbooks.org). The cost is \$29.00 per volume or \$21.75 for members. The turnaround time from ordering through printing to delivery is an astounding three to four days.

The latest project that the **Center** has undertaken is the preservation of a collection of "Yizkor Books," memorial books produced after World War II to collect documents from vanished villages, cities and neighborhoods. Survivors pooled memorabilia, maps, birth certificates and other documents and then printed them in facsimile in beautiful large format editions for the sponsoring association. These volumes were printed in very short print runs and so are very rare. Approximately 800 of these **Yizkor Books** are known to exist and they are in growing demand mainly for the primary source social history that they represent. **VTLS** is managing the scanning of these volumes.

As reported at the time: "**Aaron Lansky** finds it 'sweet' that such a venerable literature is leading the way into the future of book preservation and distribution." Every day we read more about scanning, digitizing and offerings of POD collections from libraries, archives and museums worldwide. It is truly a renaissance for out-of-print books.

Out of the Box and Into the Bookstore: Non-Traditional Use of the Bookstore

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Abstract

This paper deals with the use of the bookstore in the library acquisitions process, focusing on two non-traditional projects that utilized a large discount wholesaler and library-sponsored faculty book-buying trips to retail bookstores. We hope to show through our own experiences that in certain circumstances libraries can benefit by stepping out of the usual acquisitions channels.

Overview of Bookstore Use

Libraries use bookstores for a variety of reasons. Bookstores can be a good source for materials of local interest, especially items published by small local or regional publishers that may not be carried by the jobbers. And, of course, libraries have long turned to used bookstores for out-of-print titles, although typically the transaction is conducted over the phone,

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BORN & LIVED: Born in West Virginia, grew up in Ohio, and lived in Kentucky, North Carolina, Virginia and WV.

EDUCATION: BA in Philosophy and MA in English from Morehead State (KY) and MLS from University of Kentucky. Also a Secondary Teaching Certificate in English from UNC - Chapel Hill.

FIRST JOB: Reference Librarian at Davis & Elkins College in Elkins, WV.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: I had an earlier stint at Marshall University as ILL Librarian, left to become Librarian at Blue Ridge Community College in Virginia, and came back to Marshall as Collection Development Librarian about 3 years ago.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Run, read, collect books, watch movies. I have cheesy book and movie reviews on personal Website: <http://webpages.marshall.edu/~grayd/index.html>.

FAVORITE BOOKS: White Noise by Don DeLillo, That Night by Alice McDermott, anything about baseball by Bill James - I could go on and on.

PHILOSOPHY: I studied enough Philosophy to realize that I could never in a million years articulate a coherent personal philosophy.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Continue to both build the physical collection and increase information access in a challenging budgetary environment.

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through the mail, or, increasingly, over the Web. Websites such as **Alibris**, **ABE**, and others have made these transactions much easier, even when large want lists are involved. Additionally, libraries have also dealt with used bookstores by exchanging gift books or other unwanted items for credit.

There are several advantages of using a bookstore. First, from a collection development standpoint visiting a bookstore offers a librarian a rare chance to inspect the books firsthand before purchase. In some stores you may also find the staff has particular subject expertise or the store may specialize in one or more subject areas, including local or regional subjects. Second, the immediacy of pulling the books off the shelves and taking them back to the library is a pleasant change from placing an order and waiting days or weeks for the books to arrive. There are potential benefits on the acquisitions side

as well. Many stores will offer significant discounts to libraries, and while discounts may vary according to the dollar amount purchased, in many cases bookstores may match or exceed the discount level of jobbers. A large library purchase may be incentive enough for a bookstore to be flexible with their billing terms as well. And used bookstores typically offer lower prices even before library discounts are considered.

On the other hand, there are reasons why bookstores aren't typically the first choice for libraries. Bookstores are not designed to deal with the volume of requests and all the requirements that libraries place on their book vendors. They may not be able to offer the number of titles or match the discounts of jobbers, not to mention the lack of other services that libraries take for granted, such as status reports, claims and returns, and pre-processing. Even when purchasing on a small scale librarians face challenges if they wish to buy books at a bookstore. If you are browsing and choosing titles off the shelf then you have the real possibility of buying duplicates of titles your library already holds. Some librarians may not feel comfortable enough in their knowledge of, or familiarity with, certain subject areas and may be reluctant to purchase titles without reviews, even when the books themselves are readily available for review. Finally, if shipping is not available you must be prepared to load heavy boxes of books into your vehicle and then unload them again at the library.

Discount Wholesale Bookstores — Filling the Gaps

You may have purchased books for personal use from **Daedalus** or **Edward Hamilton** catalogs or from discount bookstores in outlet malls, but there do exist wholesale bookstores that operate on a scale large enough to make them worthy of consideration for libraries. One example is the **Green Valley Book Fair**.

Green Valley Book Fair (<http://www.gvbookfair.com/>) is a wholesale book enterprise near Harrisonburg, Virginia that offers 500,000 books at discounts ranging from sixty to ninety percent. They don't stock used titles, but do have out-of-print titles - primarily remainders, overstocks, and hurts, which are books returned to publishers because of slight damage to the book or dustjacket. They carry books from a number of publishers, including academic presses. While the stock constantly changes, publishers have included **Oxford**, **Cambridge**, **Smithsonian**, **Twayne**, **Harvard**, **Princeton**, **Que**, **Knopf**, **HarperCollins**, and **Macmillan Reference**.

What kind of library would be interested in using a resource like **Green Valley**? **Marshall University Libraries** have a collection of less than 400,000 monographs and a materials budget that is fairly low, with firm orders totaling less than \$200,000 annually. An Amigos examination showed that between 1989 and 1997 we bought only 32% as many titles as our average peer institution, which has led to quite a few gaps in the collection. **Green Valley** offers an opportunity to take a small amount of money and fill in a few of these gaps and strengthen the general collection.

Nuts and Bolts of Buying

Green Valley works with libraries and accepts purchase orders or credit cards, but offers no additional discounts to libraries beyond their normal discounted prices. Shipping is available at cost. With this many books to inspect it can take a whole day or more to go through the stock and we have typically chosen several hundred titles. **Green Valley** agreed to have one of their employees search **Marshall's OPAC** to screen for duplicates. This reduces the number of duplicate titles to a very small number — our last shipment of over 500 titles included 6 duplicates that slipped through, and **Green Valley** will accept those as returns. The searching process may take them several days, but when completed the books and invoice are shipped with the whole process taking two weeks at the most.

Results

The charts below show the number of titles purchased in the last three years and their cost. The average discount from list price for the past three years has been 74.43%.

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BORN & LIVED: Hartford, Conn — Lived Conn, Kansas, Hawaii, Mass, Missouri Colorado.

EARLY LIFE: Sports.

FAMILY: Wife and two children (one is a second lieutenant in the Army).

EDUCATION: BA Psychology U. of Hawaii, MLS U. of Hawaii, MBA U. of Conn.

FIRST JOB: U. of Conn. Health Sciences Medical Library.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Technology and its uses.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Golf and watch UConn basketball.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Grisham.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Lack of political involvement by young people.

PHILOSOPHY: Taking the higher road for administrative decisions.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Federally funded Nursing Grant in 1980.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Establishment of a "National Library of Business."

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: We'll be more subject oriented service providers. Instead of bibliographies on "marketing" we'll develop exercises which are online that show students how information in this area is organized.

purchases is circulation counts. At **Marshall** we compared a sample of **Green Valley** titles purchased in 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 against titles purchased during the same period through faculty request, since most of our firm orders are initiated by faculty. The results were a surprise - we had seen the **Green Valley** books circulating and had assumed they were being used more heavily, but that wasn't the case. In both yearly groupings, the **Green Valley** titles lagged slightly in circulation:

Evaluation by Circulation (July 2002)		
1999-2000 Purchases	Circs per Title	Titles w Circ.
GV Titles	.78	48%
Faculty Orders	.92	56%
2000-01 Purchases	Circs per Title	Titles w Circ.
GV Titles	.62	44%
Faculty Orders	.72	48%

There were other drawbacks as well. The most obvious is the selection available from **Green Valley**, where the hard sciences are in short supply and many of the books were published up to five years ago. Also, as the graphs showed, we have purchased smaller numbers of titles each year because their stock may not turn over completely and therefore some titles we see on the shelves may have been purchased on a previous trip. On the acquisitions side we had to spend some staff time creating an itemized invoice that listed individual titles, which is a requirement of our University accounting office that **Green Valley** was not prepared to meet. Additionally, we must factor in the cost of travel and lodging.

On the positive side there are real benefits for the library, quality books at huge cost savings being far and away the most important. Other benefits are more personal than organizational in nature. Just having the opportunity to personally inspect and choose hundreds of books for the library is extremely satisfying.

you probably have no need for such a project since most of the titles that would interest you are probably already in your collection. And these types of purchases are typically conducted as a supplement to, rather than a substitution for, a comprehensive collection development plan. If, on the other hand, you are in a situation where a smaller collection and materials budget has allowed gaps to develop it may be possible to perform some valuable collection development for very little money.

Faculty Book-Buying Trips

At **Colorado Christian University (CCU)**, a small liberal arts university, faculty are invited to select books for the university library at local book superstores. This retail purchase approach to acquiring books has been maturing for the past three years. **CCU** is a non denominational

Christian liberal arts university offering 25 majors and three masters to 800 traditional and 1,000 adult students. Historically, the library was poorly funded and students were guided to other metropolitan libraries as sources of books and journals. **CCU** is in the process of reinvesting in its library for both books and journals. Similar to most academic libraries, **CCU** uses four channels for acquiring books. Approval books, faculty recommendations and selections by librarians account for more than sixty percent of annual purchases. The fourth way, faculty trips, has evolved into a major channel of new books and has provided institutional benefits beyond the book collection itself.

The establishment of super retail bookstores has allowed choices in stock to make the purchasing trips productive. **Tattered Cover** and **Barnes & Noble**, the two most often used stores, each have over 150,000 unique titles in their stock. Purchase orders have varied from \$500 to as much as \$5,000 for a purchasing trip. Faculty purchases have ranged from a low of a few dozen up to more than 250 books on a single trip.

Prior to the final purchase, the library checks each title to determine if it is already owned. A copy of the sales receipt, which lists each title and price, provides a quick way to check duplicates. The sales receipt is sent to the faculty showing them what they purchased. Once in the library, these books are quickly cataloged and placed on the new bookshelves. These books are heavily used by patrons and this method for buying books has proven to be extremely popular and productive for faculty, students and **CCU's** library.

Evolution of the Process

In the first year, only library staff did retail shopping. We identified books for purchase and created a written list while at the store. Then we would go back to the library to see if we owned any of the books. Multiple trips to retail stores proved too labor intensive. Eventually, work-study students accompanied us on our trip. The student at the store would telephone the li-

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Evaluation

One objective standard for evaluating these

Issues to Consider

If you are thinking of trying a similar project, there are points to consider. First, finding possible sources for remainders and overstocks can be done through a little research. *Literary Marketplace* has a section called "Wholesalers — Activity Index" that lists possibilities.

Also, when choosing a source and planning your buying trips keep these issues in mind:

- Selection / Coverage / Physical Condition
- Return Procedures
- Duplicate Prevention
- Invoicing / Payment Requirements
- Shipping Availability
- Prices / Discounts

Seeking out these unconventional bookstore sources is not for every library. If your materials budget is healthy, and your collection strong,

library and a second work-study student would do a title check as the books were selected for possible purchase. This allowed for a single trip, reduced the amount of labor in writing lists and proved acceptable in eliminating duplicate purchases. On average, ten percent of the selected books were already in our limited collection of 39,000 books. During this year, we found that spending more than \$3,000 at one time tended to make the buying trip tedious. We were enjoying the trips enough that we decided to invite a faculty member to join us.

The Dean from Humanities, a historian, was invited in year two to accompany us to the new **Barnes & Noble** store. We generated a purchase order for \$2,500 at the new super store. The Dean selected more than \$2,500 worth of books, but we found ten percent of them were already owned. In year two, several faculty members and two other deans were invited on five trips. Our planning was minimal and invitations often depended on faculty's being in and around the library at the right time. Late in the year, we invited two members of the English Department to accompany us to the **Tattered Cover** bookstore. The faculty invited an English student to help and brought a list of literature books to purchase. This trip took more time and effort on their part, but both were pleased with what they acquired.

Let the Bookstore's Shelves Speak to the Curriculum

We learned how much of a mistake bringing a list of titles can be when the Dean of the School of Music brought a list of 200 music CDs to **Barnes & Noble**. Denver's **Barnes & Noble (B & N)** store claims to stock 40,000 music CD titles. Our experience of searching for specific CDs was slow, tedious and resulted in less than 20 percent success. Display categories used by **B & N's** music department were confusing and lacked consistency. Instead of spending \$2,000 as we had planned, we purchased less than \$500 in music CDs. Our music faculty was frustrated and felt that the retail CDs were overpriced. After this frustrating experience, we changed our invitations.

We told faculty if they had a title list, give it to the library and we'd use a book jobber or CD supplier to buy the materials. Trips to the super bookstores were to be made specifically without a list. The idea was to "let the store's bookshelves speak to their curriculum." This has had an immediate and lasting positive impact by speeding up the purchasing process and reducing work for faculty. Faculty would come back from the store and say they were pleasantly surprised by the variety of academic books on the shelves. We found that faculty needed to be constantly reminded of the importance of simplicity. Our goal was to keep the trips simple and fun, a time for communicating between librarians and faculty, and most importantly, to buy books.

In its third year, the program has become more formal by design, standardizing the process while losing some of its personal touch. A

memo was sent to six CCU Deans offering to purchase \$5,000 for each school. The idea was not to limit each school to this amount but to turn over the invitation of faculty to the deans. Some deans formed buying committees while others divided the funds by departments in the school. Again, we needed to reinforce the fact that retail purchases were to be simple. Due to faculty feedback, we expanded the stores to include a school of theology and a larger university's bookstore. However, we found that becoming more formal and relying on the Deans actually reduced the number of buying trips in year three. Still, in addition to the offer to each dean, we continued to make special trips with faculty for building specific subject areas. In one such trip, our Chairman of the Art Department purchased \$3,800 worth of books in forty-five minutes!

On the other extreme is a history professor who thinks buying new books is a waste of money. Instead, this faculty member selected three metro used bookstores to visit. We generated a purchase order of \$150 for each store and two stores were visited, with the faculty member eventually returning to one of the stores to purchase an additional \$800 worth from this store. We invited the chairman of the art department to visit the same used bookstore because of the extensive collection of art and architecture books. After his visit, the Art chairman has expressed an interest in shopping at this used bookstore.

Lessons Learned

Our experience is that books acquired from retail stores differ significantly from books supplied by our approval plan. Not surprisingly, the approval books are more academic. Yet, we were surprised by the number of "scholarly monographs" which were on the superstore shelves. Another "truism" surfaced from these efforts. It takes six months for the retail stock to change over to make second trips productive by the same faculty members. Another fact,

you can send faculty by themselves and have them simply pull books and leave them at the "institutional" sales desk for later payment. From the library's perspective, retail purchase trips take time, effort and need library participation in order to maximize the benefit. The library, faculty and students all benefit from this method of buying new books.

Faculty win in this process. First, they can build their part of the collection to augment the courses they are or will be teaching. Next, faculty can observe and examine new books which, if valuable, they can acquire on the spot. Finally, faculty gains a better grasp for which books are in the library.

Students win with the book buying trips. Books which are relevant to what the faculty discuss are in the collection. Students are assured that faculty's recommended books have been purchased.

From a collection development perspective, the library also wins. First, the library is assured of obtaining books that are highly useful to the students. Next, our library does not have the staff to specialize in many subject areas and our faculty can provide some relief for this deficiency. Finally, the library is exhibiting its trust in the choices made by faculty and building strong institutional relationships between the library and faculty. The library receives much praise for working closely with the faculty and the relationships we have formed with faculty and administration due to this program have strengthened the institutional support for the library and its budget. We receive a higher rate of faculty input than previously experienced, and from a purely marketing perspective, we get great PR from this effort. While our budgets are not large, we are experiencing a steady increase in levels of support.

Conclusion

Again, these types of programs are not suitable for all academic libraries, but they do demonstrate that there are opportunities outside the traditional channels for smaller libraries to build their collections, save money, and even build political support on campus.

Searching for the Seldom Seen: Sources and Strategies for Acquiring Out-of-Distribution Videos

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Is there anything more omnipresent in the consumer marketplace, more culturally ubiquitous than video? Since their appearance on retail shelves in the mid-70's, home video players have insinuated themselves into well over eighty per cent of American households; the sale of

DVD players has been even more precipitous. The explosion of VCR and DVD sales has both fueled and been fueled by analogous explosions in the quantity of video software on the market, ranging from the sublimely engaging to the su-

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