המכון הבינלאומי לגנאלוגיה יהודית ומרכז פאול יעקבי, ירושלים

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH GENEALOGY AND PAUL JACOBI CENTER

AT THE JEWISH NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, JERUSALEM

"Tools and Technology" Proposal

***Master Portal
to Jewish Genealogy Sources and Resources***

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Background

Jewish Genealogy has been part of modern Jewish Studies ever since Leopold Zunz and his circle launched the "Science of Judaism" (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) almost 200 years ago. Although interest in the subject varied from place to place and from period to period, an extensive literature of immense importance has been developed over time, mostly in European languages and often in the form of specialised studies published in hard-to-trace scholarly journals.

In the last quarter of a century, with the advent of the personal computer (PC) and access to archives in Eastern Europe, public interest and involvement in Jewish Genealogy has literally "exploded". This extraordinary phenomenon has resulted in a surge of printed works related to Jewish Genealogy, the discovery of countless sources and resources for Jewish genealogical research and an infrastructure of Jewish Genealogy websites, many offering invaluable databases of information extracted and translated from previously inaccessible archives. In parallel, vast datasets of direct interest to Jewish genealogists have come online, ranging from the *Yad Vashem* Name Index and the Ellis Island Database to complete national censuses in the UK, the US and other countries in the West where there are large Jewish populations.

This wealth of material, however, is diffuse and frequently beyond the reach of the average Jewish genealogist and family historian, who generally does not have the information and skills to locate what he/she requires, despite the assists provided by such search engines as Google and certain specialised facilities available on the Internet. Thus, there is a demonstrable need today for a Master Bibliography for Jewish Genealogy and a dynamic site, utilizing the exponential growth in IT technology that will have the capacity to guide subscribers to (and through) the ever-growing body of Jewish Genealogy sources and resources.

Proposal

It is proposed to answer the need described above in four stages, by developing:

1. Computerised Master Bibliography of Jewish Genealogy - This multi-lingual bibliography would embrace printed works of all kinds – books, genealogies, journals, periodicals, articles and other publications – that for the most part have appeared over the last two centuries.

Ideally, this Master Bibliography would be made in conjunction with the National Library of Israel and in collaboration with their bibliographers, who would maintain the site.

After obtaining the necessary permissions and copyright waivers, advantage would be taken of the catalogues of major libraries already online, including that of the National Library of Israel, where the Genealogical Institute is housed. The end-product will be searchable by the same categories as the Library of Congress (author, title, name, etc.) and other categories specific to Jewish genealogy (family trees, rabbis, places, etc.).

2 <u>Digitalization</u> - An effort should be should be made to digitalize selected significant printed   items. A starting point could be the systematic <u>digitalization of significant genealogical articles </u>from hard to access Jewish and non-Jewish periodicals and scholarly journals, for publication both on the Institute's website and on CD's, with an advanced search engine to facilitate use.

3 <u>World Guide to Sources and Resources for Jewish Genealogy </u>- with listings and descriptions of archival and other sources and resources for Jewish Genealogy worldwide, plus electronic links to those online, particularly - but not only - in Jewish genealogical sites. Broadly speaking, the materials will be organised geographically (by country) with further search facilities for sub-categories such as places, names, archives and repositories, topics, etc.

4. <u>Automated Genealogy Portal</u> – centralising all of the above, searchable and providing quick links to the relevant catalogues, sites, etc. etc.

A fee-paying service could be offered whereby subscribers to the site would be able to register their areas of interest in order to receive automatic prompts to new items, as they are located and/or posted online.

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These initiatives present daunting technical challenges, given abundance of printed materials in libraries and the plethora of sources and resources that have been located in recent years – and are being located – in countries with Jewish populations, whether still present or not.

Thus it is proposed that the first step should be the preparation of an overall project plan, determining scope, baselines, priorities, templates, entry formats, costs and a detailed timetable (with benchmarks to measure progress).

In parallel, detailed budgets, manpower requirements and time schedules should be elaborated.

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